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# AN INQUIRY

CONCERNING THE

## RELATION OF DEATH TO PROBATION.

BY

G. FREDERICK WRIGHT,

PROFESSOR OF THE LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE OF THE NEW TESTAMENT  
IN OBERLIN THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY; AUTHOR OF "THE LOGIC  
OF CHRISTIAN EVIDENCES," AND "STUDIES IN  
SCIENCE AND RELIGION."

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## P R E F A C E.

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THE generally accepted doctrine of the Christian Church concerning future things, is that at the end of the world there is to be a formal judgment of mankind, when each person is to receive final sentence according to his character—the wicked being consigned to a state of conscious punishment which is everlasting in its duration, while the righteous are received into an endless state of happiness. The specific question of the parallel and everlasting character of these awards is discussed in the fourth chapter of this inquiry.

But the maintenance of the doctrine of a final judgment at the end of the world, leaves it an open question what is to be the condition of the soul between death and the judgment. Is this "intermediate state" one in which the offers of mercy through Christ, so freely extended here, are continued? May we hope that some who are incor-

rigible in their wickedness this side the grave, will repent in that interval which occurs between death and the judgment? This is the question which has seemed specially to call for the present volume, and is specifically discussed in the second and third chapters.

It is important also to remark that these two questions are quite distinct in their character. A person may believe in a probation between death and the judgment, and not be a Universalist, since he may hold that there is no further probation after the general judgment.

A distinction should also be made between those who hold to a *second* probation, and those who believe in *continued probation*. Some believe that although the offers of mercy are never re-presented to those who once distinctly reject them, yet that every man will have a definite probation under the gospel as distinct from what he has under the law; and that those who have not had the motives of the gospel presented to them in this life, will have them presented before the final judgment. This is the more specific form of the question as now before the public mind, and largely gives shape to the present discussion.



Our quotations of Scripture are from the Revised Version, and we have not deemed it worth while to question either the translation or the Greek text from which it was made. It is not credible that so important a doctrine as that we are here considering has been left by divine providence dependent upon the settlement of doubtful matters in the minutiae of biblical criticism. Without descending to too small points we have aimed to give the correct perspective to the various elements of the question rather than to treat it exhaustively. As such we commit the volume to the consideration of candid readers.

G. FREDERICK WRIGHT.

OBERLIN, O., June 7, 1882.



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# AN INQUIRY

CONCERNING

## THE RELATION OF DEATH TO PROBATION.

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### CHAPTER I.

#### CONDITIONS OF THE PROBLEM.

WE propose to consider, in as brief a manner as is consistent with clearness, the question whether it is taught in the Scriptures that man's probation is limited by death; or, whether the Bible warrants the hope that the probation of some may be continued beyond the grave. It is necessary first to consider some of the peculiar conditions of the problem.

The question is not one in which we may look for absolute demonstration, but one in which probability must be our guide, and in respect to which our *practical beliefs* should be determined both by the weight of evidence and by the exigencies of our situation. In fixing upon a practical line of action respecting such a subject, it is proper, and indeed essential, that we consider the consequences of an erroneous judgment upon one side or other of the point at issue. With what hazard are our

opinions attended? This question is never irrelevant to a practical decision in matters of faith, but is always imperative. A wise man does not suspend great interests on doubtful adventures, unless he be compelled to do so. There is *speculation* (in the business sense of that word) in religion as well as in ordinary affairs, and in both cases it is equally an object of just suspicion.

The nature of the case in hand is such that the error in judgment is much more serious in its consequences if made in one direction than if made in another. If those persons err who unduly push upon the attention of the world their *doubts* respecting the earthly limits of man's probation, their error involves irretrievable consequences. To adopt a theory which leads to an erroneous depreciation of the importance of this life, and of the extent of the mercies enjoyed by all men in it, is a most serious matter. In the ordinary affairs of life, we adopt such a course of action as shall guard against evils which are not only not probable but are scarcely more than possible. We insure our houses, not because it is *probable* they will burn, but because it is *possible* they may be consumed by fire. In our ignorance we compel our doubts to lean upon the side of safety. If we are not *sure* whether the train leaves at half-past ten or at eleven, we advise our friend, who needs to go upon it, to be present at half-past ten.

A little reflection will show to any one that underlying all the activities of evangelical Christendom is the belief that what is done for the salvation of men must be done in this world, and for the living. Remove this belief from our congregations and relieve the rising generation of ministers and active laymen from the burden of this responsibility, and you have cut the nerve of nearly every form of evangelical activity. The removal of this belief would almost of necessity cause missionary zeal to flag, and efforts for revivals of religion to cease. For if it be true that God has left himself as free to offer pardon to sinners after death as before, and to ply their hearts then as now with the means of grace, there is, as men commonly reason, little occasion for present urgency. Procrastination would then most certainly be the thief of time. If punctuality is not to be insisted upon by the Creator, it will rarely be secured from his subjects.

Nor is this view of the case any disparagement either of the benevolence of God, or of the motives animating the church of Christ. It is true that fear of punishment has torment; yet even thus it reveals the Moral Governor in a benignant light, since it is a warning given in time; and the wise man when he foresees the evil flees from it. The fog-horn is a warning to the sailor that danger is near, and its piercing notes impress him with a

sense of the kindly forethought of a paternal government. Personal fear is not indeed the highest motive from which men act, but in man's sinful condition it ordinarily marks the point at which holy activity begins. Now, as of old, the law is the schoolmaster leading to Christ.

There is, however, another and far more interesting aspect of fear which we need to consider. It is the fear which leads us to have *concern* for others, and which incites men to put forth heroic efforts to save their fellows from impending danger. The shipwrecked crew is drowning. It is the impending *danger* of his fellows which urges the sailor upon the shore to breast the waves and risk his own life in a desperate effort to carry them relief. It is the danger to which their comrades are exposed which transforms the efforts of a life-saving crew from foolhardiness into heroism. The motives that give nerve and endurance to the stroke of a life-saving crew are infinitely higher than those animating a crew striving in a race for a prize.

Thus it is fear in the form of *solicitude* which gives such pathos to missionary zeal. It is not the mere endurance of privation and suffering upon the part of missionaries which so touches the hearts of all beholders; for thousands endure equal privations for the sake of wealth or renown. We pity such, but do not admire them. Even explorers who endure hardships for the praiseworthy object



of increasing the stock of human knowledge, fail to arouse the highest admiration of their fellow-men. It was Livingstone's missionary zeal which gave him such pre-eminence among travellers. The beliefs out of which that zeal sprang were, that there were great wrongs to be righted, and great favors to be conferred upon the heathen, and that in righting these wrongs and conferring these favors, reliance must be had not on the indefinite purposes of God's mercy, but upon the performance by the Church and by Christian nations of the definite and urgent duties which Divine Providence pointed out.

We admire the heroism of arctic voyagers in their attempts to penetrate the unexplored regions about the pole. But the objects they propose to accomplish are not lofty enough to kindle our highest admiration. The world may suffer no irreparable loss if the icy wastes about the pole continue to conceal their secrets from the curious eyes of men. But far different is it with the privations and heroism of the missionary, who, with his wife and children, buries himself in the obscurity of some frontier parish, or upon some lone island of the sea, under the belief that God's offers of mercy to mankind are restricted to this life, and that upon the Christian church is laid the responsibility of presenting the gracious motives of the gospel to some who otherwise never would

hear of them. To these heroic messengers of the gospel, the Church will ever pay its homage, and they shall shine as the stars in heaven, because they turned many to righteousness. The missionary is over zealous, and the Church mistaken in the principles upon which it metes out its praise, if this life is not revealed as the scene of supreme importance in determining the destinies of the human race.

It is no answer to this line of argument to allege that true believers are animated by a desire to *glorify* God rather than to save the souls of men, and that therefore they will respond to the command of the Lord without thought of what results are depending upon their obedience. This might indeed be the case in some ideal state of moral purity and mental illumination, but now, most assuredly, one mode of God's revelation of duty to men is through the manifestation to them of the interests dependent upon their activity. God loved the world, and sent forth his Son to save men from sin and its consequent misery. Our Lord did not come down to the earth upon an ideal mission in defence of abstract truth, but upon an errand of love to meet a real danger to which men were exposed. The imperative reason for seeking the sheep was that they were lost and would not find their way back to the fold, unless the shepherd himself went after them. The com-

mand of the Saviour that his disciples should preach the gospel to every creature implies, also, that important human interests are to be subserved by obedience to that command. If anything less than the eternal salvation of souls is dependent upon it, evangelical Christians have not read the Scriptures aright. If the means of grace employed by the Church for the conversion of living men do not bring to bear upon them motives such as, in the economy of God's plans, cannot be secured in a future state of existence, then the urgency with which the gospel is proclaimed by evangelical Christians is excessive.

Doubtless, one reason why Protestant Christians have so uniformly rejected from their practical belief all forms of the doctrine of future probation is, that it is specially out of harmony with the rest of their doctrinal system, and so is contrary to the "analogy of evangelical faith." The Roman Catholic church has use for the doctrine of purgatory, and for the practice of praying for the dead; but the Protestant doctrine of salvation through personal faith in the blood of Christ, does not readily admit into its company even these Romish notions concerning the state of the righteous between death and the judgment. It should be observed, however, that the Romish doctrines of purgatory and of prayer for the dead do not imply a continuance of probation after death,

if by probation is meant a state in which a radical change of character is expected to take place. To the Catholic, purgatory and prayer for the dead are for the further purification of such only as have already been regenerated in baptism. The zeal of Catholic missionaries is due in large measure to their belief that the unbaptized heathen are lost beyond recovery.

In contrast with Catholicism, evangelical Christianity, in its efforts to impart the blessings of the gospel to men, relies not on ceremonial forms, but on direct appeals to the heart through preaching and the written Word. Protestants rely upon the direct presentation of the truth to the mind, and upon the co-operation of the Holy Spirit to increase its motive power. The power of truth over the human mind may be increased either by enlarging the letters in which it is written, or by clarifying the vision of the beholder. On the human side direct efforts for the conversion of men must be limited to such as naturally present the truth in brighter light and bolder outline. It is, therefore, by a natural instinct that evangelical Christians are fearful of any attempt to introduce into their systems of belief the idea of probation beyond the grave. For that belief does not come alone, but carries with it serious modifications of their views concerning the guilt of sin, and the grounds upon which the gracious privileges of the

gospel are dispensed to men. The gospel is a system of *grace*. Under it the blessings bestowed upon sinners far transcend their deserts. No man who has attained to moral responsibility can demand of his Creator any further privileges than are furnished by the light of nature. Whatever is more than that comes of grace, as it is dispensed by infinite wisdom. We commit a capital mistake if we underestimate the light which comes to mankind in the course of nature. To all men conscience speaks of duty, and with no uncertain sound.

Of this aspect of the subject, however, more must be said at a later stage of the discussion. We have alluded to it here, partly to make it evident that the vital question touching future probation does not pertain to the case of infants and idiots. Concerning these we have no responsibility, and we may leave them in hope in the hands of their righteous and merciful Creator.

It is not evangelical Christianity which has produced the belief that death ends the probation of men and that solicitude for their welfare should be confined to their earthly existence, but it is this belief which has largely given color and direction to evangelical activities. Evangelical Christians have believed that their call of God was to labor with, and pray for, the living. They have felt called upon to emphasize the paramount importance of the present scene of existence in

which the atonement was made, and where the Son of God appeared to reveal his mercy and grace and to plead with his forlorn and rebellious subjects. The future they leave to the wisdom of a just and merciful God. The activities of evangelical Christianity are in imitation of the zeal of the Apostles, and are in harmony with the biblical doctrines concerning the pervasiveness of sin, and the greatness of the atonement.

It is, moreover, a cardinal principle of Protestantism that nothing is to be incorporated into the active beliefs of the Christian life, except due warrant can be found for it in the Bible. This is a most important principle if the Church is to preserve the purity of its motives.

The books of the New Testament were written during the lifetime of the Apostles,\* and reflect the rays of light which came directly from the person and presence of Christ. These writings preserve the gospel not only as it was *delivered* by the Apostles and companions of our Lord, but as it was *received* and *apprehended* and acted upon by the early Christians. They come to us with the endorsement not merely of the individual writers, but also of the great body of men and women who first espoused the cause of Christ. These had heard the gospel from the lips of the Apostles

\* For detailed proof of this statement, see the author's *Logic of Christian Evidences*.



themselves. So long and so widely had the gospel been proclaimed by the immediate companions of the Saviour when the New Testament was completed, and so varied are the collected writings contained in that book, that if any well-defined doctrine is neither clearly stated in it nor fairly deducible from it, its absence must be through design. Protestants, therefore, do well to fill their flagons at the fountain-head of Christianity, rather than at those places where the streams have been polluted by the impurities of patristic speculation. Whether it can justly be held that a belief in the continuance of probation after death must be excluded from the beliefs endorsed as apostolic by the primitive church, will be considered in succeeding chapters.

Evangelical Christendom *may* have been mistaken in emphasizing, as it has, the significance of the deeds done by man in the body ! The zeal of the missionary, to which such homage has been paid, *may* have been without knowledge ! The urgency of the Church in calling upon men to repent while the lamp of life holds out to burn, *may* have proceeded from a false interpretation of Scripture ! The new light which good old John Robinson expected yet to break forth from the Bible, *may* be such as to constrain evangelical Christendom to exchange those beliefs concerning the limits of human probation by which it has heretofore com-

manded both the attention of the wicked and the devotion of the pious, for a belief which sets no limits to man's probation except the development of an arbitrarily assumed standard of wicked character, and which will substitute vague hopes of some ill-defined opportunities after death for the more definite and effective incentives which have so far controlled its activity.

The truth we must follow wherever it may lead. But in searching for the path of wisdom we must not forget the natural dimness of human vision, and the natural limitations to human reason. It is not for man to see with perfect clearness. In his best estate, man's vision is beset with some measure of obscurity. It is not for man to comprehend anything completely, or to clear any practical question of all its difficulties. In finding a basis for practical action man is compelled to *weigh* evidence, to *balance* probabilities, to follow the *best* light he has, and then boldly to act upon the evidence which is most clear. It is a fatal mistake to suffer one's activities to be paralyzed by the residuum of doubts which disclose themselves in connection with even the most surely-grounded systems of faith. We should by all means follow the light, but let it be the *clearest* light attainable. We should yield to the evidence, but, by all means, let it be the *strongest* evidence. Before taking that new departure (urged upon us



of late by some) from the faith of our fathers, and persuading ourselves so to regard death that it shall lose its supreme significance as an end of probation, we need to pause and consider well what we are doing, and the grounds upon which we make the change. Is this proposed departure a forward or a backward movement? To answer this inquiry let us, since we regard the Scriptures as God's clearest revelation to us, examine, first, the portions of the Bible in which it is supposed that there are intimations of a continuance of probation to some after death; and, secondly, those passages which are supposed to teach that there is to be no change of character after death; *i. e.*, that such persons as have attained to moral accountability before death will retain forever the character which they have formed here. Upon a theme of such immense practical significance, it is certainly the part of wisdom to bow our heads in reverence, and wait for very clear light before we disturb the old foundations. The consent of many generations of the good, who, with all their faults, we cannot doubt to have been under the general guidance of the promised Divine Spirit, cannot but have great weight with truly pious hearts. Those who believe that probation may not end with this life should be able to prove it from the Scriptures with great conclusiveness before they claim recognition for their views.

## CHAPTER II.

### ALLEGED REASONS FOR BELIEVING THAT THERE IS PROBATION FOR SOME AFTER DEATH.

THE grounds upon which the Christian public is advised to abandon the historical belief that man's character for eternity is determined by his conduct before death, are twofold :

*First.* That certain passages of Scripture, either directly or by implication, teach that some will have their probation continued after death.

*Second.* That with the supposition of such a continuance of probation the character of God appears more just and merciful.

I. We will first consider the passages of Scripture adduced as favoring the theory. Foremost among these stand 1 Peter iii. 18-20, and iv. 3-6, which in the Revised Version read as follows : " Because Christ also suffered for sins once, the righteous for the unrighteous, that he might bring us to God ; being put to death in the flesh, but quickened in the spirit ; in which also he *went and preached unto the spirits in prison*, which aforetime were disobedient, when the long-suffering of God waited in

the days of Noah, while the ark was a preparing" (1 Peter iii. 18-20). "For the time past may suffice to have wrought the desire of the Gentiles . . . wherein they think it strange that ye run not with them into the same excess of riot, speaking evil of you : who shall give account to him that is ready to judge the quick and the dead. For unto this end was the *gospel preached even to the dead* that they might be judged according to men in the flesh, but live according to God in the spirit" (1 Peter iv. 3-6).

The interpretation frequently put upon these obscure passages is that Christ, during the period between the crucifixion and the resurrection, went in person to the abode of the lost spirits who had refused to hear Noah, and that he then offered to them the terms of the gospel for acceptance. But, even granting that this were unquestionably the correct explanation, it would scarcely warrant us in drawing the inference that similar offers will be made to others who have died without the gospel. For, the situation seems altogether exceptional. The period between Christ's death and resurrection was unique in the history of redemption, and nothing that occurred in it can be taken as an indication of the ordinary course of divine providence. The whole of that period continued scarcely more than thirty-six hours ; while his mission to the earth was thirty-three years. Nor

is there any intimation given that the preaching produced any favorable effect upon the hearers. Granting that the preaching took place as is supposed, it is not altogether unlikely to have been for the purpose of *demonstrating the uselessness* of adding in the other world to the privileges men have enjoyed in this — a thought so forcibly illustrated in the parable of the rich man and Lazarus by the refusal of Abraham to send any further light to such as already had Moses and the prophets.

We are led to still greater hesitancy about drawing any general inference from these passages, by the fact that they stand so much apart from the main drift of Scripture. The interpretation given above *does not conform to the analogy of faith*, — that is, to the harmony of one portion of Scripture with another, — according to which this life is the great scene of combat between the powers of light and the powers of darkness. An exceptional transaction like that supposed, need no more disturb our belief in the general order of divine grace than a miracle need shake our confidence in the general uniformity of nature.

A further reason for declining to draw any general inferences from the passages in question is, that we are by no means sure that they assert as a fact that Christ went in person to preach to men in the other world. It is not any serious straining of grammatical usage, to understand that

this preaching was done *by the Spirit*, in connection with the mission of Noah, *while the antediluvians were still alive*. Careful study of the original does indeed convince us that the *sinning* referred to in the time of Noah preceded the *preaching*. The participle in the subsidiary clause is in the aorist (indefinite past) tense, and from all the many cases we have examined it appears it would be properly translated here, "having sinned once," or, "after they had sinned once," or, "when they *had* sinned." \* We do not feel warranted in asserting that the dead (in 1 Peter iv. 6) to whom Christ is said to have preached, were living when he preached to them. Neither, on the other hand, is the idea that the preaching in both cases was before living audiences absolutely excluded by the grammatical construction. The preaching referred to may have been by Noah in the later days of his ministry, after they had rejected earlier warnings; and it would not be any great stretch of grammatical license to interpret 1 Peter iv. 6 as meaning, Christ preached to our ancestors who are dead. If there were other passages which clearly intimated that Christ in his atoning work went

\* We cannot agree with Pres. Bartlett (see New Englander for Oct. 1872) and Prof. Thayer (see Smith's Dictionary of the Bible (Am. Ed.) Article "Saints") in translating the participial clause, "once when they sinned." In the parallel cases adduced by Pres. Bartlett, he has not properly distinguished between the aorist (past) participle and the present.

on a mission to the world of lost spirits, there would be propriety in interpreting these verses so as to accord with the general drift of revelation. But the isolation of the passages from the main course of revelation should suggest caution to interpreters. If it be a fact that Christ preached to lost spirits, it is such a very striking one that it would naturally have been referred to more than once.

If one accepts the theory that Christ, in the interval between his death and his resurrection, went to the realm of lost spirits and preached the gospel to the antediluvians who despised Noah, there is no end to the difficulties encountered. One difficulty requiring explanation on that theory is that when on the cross Christ said to the penitent thief: "To-day shalt thou be with me in paradise" (Luke xxiii. 43). This was not a comforting promise if Christ's mission that day was to the realm of lost spirits.

Another difficulty is, that the antediluvians who neglected Noah's preaching do not seem the fittest subjects for such a mission of Christ. The reason ordinarily urged for cherishing the hope that some persons will have a probation after death, is that they did not have their proper share of privileges in this world. But the generation who despised Noah's preaching were specially favored with the grace of God when living; and they are reck-



oned in other scripture as among the very wickedest class of beings. In Luke xvii. 26, 27, they are classed with those who are found in sin when the Son of Man shall come, and with the wicked men of Sodom upon whom the Lord rained fire and brimstone. In 2 Pet. ii. 3-9, they are compared again in their wickedness to the inhabitants of Sodom and Gomorrah, and even to the angels who sinned and whom God did not spare, "but cast them down to hell and committed them to pits of darkness, to be reserved unto judgment." They cannot properly be compared to the blind and lame who, in the parable, were invited to the wedding supper of the Lamb. The antediluvians were *wicked* rather than unfortunate.

There is, however, no occasion for us to press this point; for, if the fact be conceded, it is so peculiar that it cannot to thoughtful minds seriously modify the teaching of clearer passages of Scripture, or indeed count for much in any way unless supported by clearer teachings. Those who support their doctrine of a probation continued after death from those passages, are bound, however, squarely to consider everything which their interpretation involves, and to tone down their faith by the threefold uncertainty attending it. A general reference to what they regard as the weight of modern interpretation is not sufficient. Volumes have been written upon these passages both in

ancient and modern times, and still the uncertainty about their meaning remains ; and we may properly remand them to that class which Peter attributes to Paul, and conclude that Peter himself wrote some things that are hard to be understood, and which the ignorant and unstable are in danger of wresting to their own destruction.

A second passage sometimes relied upon is Matt. xii. 32, which declares that "whosoever shall speak against the Holy Spirit, it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this world, nor in that which is to come." This is supposed by some to teach "by implication" that other sins than that against the Holy Ghost may perhaps be forgiven in the world to come. A sober view of the last clause ("neither in this world, nor in that which is to come"), however, sees in it only a rhetorical method of strengthening the first negative. If it were elsewhere clearly taught that there is forgiveness in the world to come for some sins unrepented of here, this text would permit the idea to be put into it ; but there is no sort of certainty that the doctrine is in the passage, or that the words were chosen with any design to countenance the doctrine. In the parallel passage in Mark (iii. 29) we read simply, "whosoever shall blaspheme against the Holy Spirit hath never forgiveness, but is guilty of an eternal sin." The startling element in this threat is that it indicates that there is sin which



cannot be forgiven *even in this world*. Probation may practically close before death !

Equally indecisive are the other passages adduced from the Bible to give countenance to the doctrine of a probation continued after death. Luke vii. 11-15 is among them ; where we are told that Jesus restored to life the widow's son who had died. Probably in his case his probation did not end with his first death. But this continuance of his probation, like that of his life, was *miraculous* ; and an element in the very idea of a miracle is that it is a departure from the ordinary course of nature.

Of a piece with the foregoing are the grounds upon which the inference is drawn that Onesiphorus was dead, when Paul expressed the wish that the Lord "would" grant him mercy in the day of judgment. All the ground for such an inference is that the Apostle (2 Tim. i. 16-18 ; iv. 19) sends salutations to the "*house of Onesiphorus*," and asks the Lord to grant mercy to the "*house of Onesiphorus*." This is absolutely all that is known about the subject. Paul's thus mentioning the *house*, rather than the man *may* have been because the man was dead, but it is quite as likely to have been because he was away from home ; and even if Onesiphorus were dead, such an ejaculation as Paul uttered can scarcely be construed into a prayer in the ordinary sense

of that word. "The Lord grant unto him to find mercy of the Lord in that day," is the expression of a hope rather than the utterance of a prayer.

Similarly indecisive concerning the intermediate condition of the dead are the implications supposed to lie in the expressions of the apostles in which they look forward to the judgment-day rather than to the day of their deaths for their full reward. Such expressions are found in Phil. i. 6: "He which began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Jesus Christ;" Col. iii. 4: "When Christ, who is our life, shall be manifested, then shall ye also with him be manifested in glory;" 2 Tim. i. 12: "I know him whom I have believed, and I am persuaded that he is able to guard that which I have committed unto him against that day;" iv. 8: "Henceforth there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give to me at that day."

Similar passages are 1 Thess. iv. 13-17; 1 Peter v. 4; and 1 John iii. 2; Rev. xx. 13, 14.

It is to such passages as these that the church appeals in support of its belief that neither the righteous nor the wicked enter upon their full reward at death; but no warrant can be drawn from such references to the general judgment for supposing that between death and that event there is either any change in character on the part of the

dead, or that we are permitted to pray for them with any hope of bettering their condition. The issues of death and the judgment are uniformly spoken of as being in the same direction. How God may deal with man between those two momentous events is not revealed. The parable of the rich man and Lazarus (Luke xvi. 19-31) would seem to teach, in the plainest possible terms, that the permanent separation between the righteous and the wicked takes place immediately after death.

We are indebted to Rev. Newman Smyth, D. D. (who countenances the views we are here considering), for his references to, and brief discussions of, these and some other passages of like import.\* Dr. Smyth adds some other references of still more doubtful relevancy (if that were possible), as for instance: Mark xvi. 15, 16: "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to the whole creation. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that disbelieveth shall be condemned." 1 Tim. ii. 4-6: "God our Saviour, who willeth that all men should be saved, and come to the knowledge of the truth. For there is one God, one mediator also between God and men, himself man, Christ Jesus, who gave himself a ransom for all." Luke xix. 10: "For the Son of man came to seek and to save that which was lost." 1 John

\* See the appendix to "Orthodoxy of To-Day."

ii. 2: "He is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for the whole world."

The irrelevancy of these references to the case in hand appears upon their face, as their full quotation shows. The passages teach the urgency of the duty resting upon the Church to preach the gospel to living men, and hold up the doctrine of an atonement made for, and freely offered to, all, and applicable to as many as can be persuaded to accept the terms of salvation.

We need not spend longer time in directly considering the passages of Scripture which are adduced as favoring the idea of a future probation. Even those which are clearest in their reference to the subject (if one can speak of anything as clearest when all is obscurity) treat of the intermediate state of the soul, between death and the judgment, in such an indefinite way that they teach us nothing which is specific enough to build any hope upon. None of them are sufficiently explicit in their teaching to form a basis for practical action, that is, they are not the kind of passages upon which, in so serious a matter, it is allowable to base one's faith. There are situations in which we are warranted in acting upon a low degree of evidence; but this is the case only when that low degree of evidence is the clearest light we have, and there is an emergency compelling to action. If the ship is sure to sink,

the crew may venture upon the broad ocean in open boats; but to make such a venture, except from overwhelming necessity, is anything but praiseworthy.

The obscure passages of Scripture are always to be explained by those which are clearer. We are to base our belief upon what we know rather than on what we do not know. In this respect, the interpreters of the Bible are to be held to the same rule that prevails among men of science. The scientific man is bound to be guided by facts; and to proceed with increased caution in theorizing, whenever he begins to get away from facts. A supposed fact that is itself doubtful, or is imperfectly understood, can form no secure basis for a conclusion. It is equally out of place for interpreters of the Bible to insist upon obscuring the light of the clearer passages by interposing the shadows of the dark sayings of the sacred writings, and by exalting to undue prominence the portions of the inspired word that are confessedly the hardest to be understood. This amounts to saying that, in religious faith and practice, we must be guided in all obscure pathways by the *analogy of faith*. The saving truth of the gospel is presented to us in broad outlines. A highway of holiness is cast up, in which the wayfaring man, though a fool, need not err. We have not time to stop and explore all the obscure bypaths of rev-

elation. Reverence for the word of God should warn us never, in any matter of practical moment, to depart from its main and manifest teaching.

Before leaving this part of the argument, a few words should be said upon the general teaching of scripture concerning the intermediate state.

The uniform representation of the New Testament writers is that at the end of the world there is to be a general judgment, at which public sentence is to be passed upon all men. This view forces upon us the question concerning the state into which the soul enters immediately after death, and raises the inquiry whether the administration of the divine government during the period between death and the judgment will not be similar to that here. The main considerations leading us to believe that the issues of death and the final judgment are in the same direction, will be reserved for the next chapter. In this paragraph we will state only the general facts.

The Greek word *hades* (ᾗδης) which in the old version was usually translated *hell*, but by the revisers is simply transferred, is connected in idea with the Hebrew word *sheol* (שְׁאוֹל). In the translation of the Hebrew Bible into Greek by the seventy, *hades* uniformly represented *sheol*. If, however, we go to the Old Testament for light upon the subject we shall fail of getting very much, since the future life was far less clearly



revealed under the Old dispensation than it is under the New.

The word *sheol* occurs about sixty times in the Old Testament, and in half of the cases is not improperly translated *grave*. In nearly all the other places it is translated *hell*, but the translation was made when that term had a wider meaning than now. The same author to whom we have already acknowledged our obligation (See Appendix to Dr. Newman Smyth's *Orthodoxy of To-day*, p. 178), has sifted these numerous Old Testament passages and retained those which he supposes most relevant to the proof of an intermediate state in which there may be probation after death. The reader will be able to judge of their relevancy as we quote them in full :

Job xxxviii. 17. Have the *gates of death* been opened unto thee? or hast thou seen the doors of the shadow of death?

Gen. xxxvii. 35. And he [Jacob] said, For I will go down into the *grave* unto my son mourning.

Gen. xlii. 38. Then shall ye bring down my gray hairs with sorrow to the *grave*. The expression in xliv. 29, 31, is the same.

Ps. xvi. 9, 10, is more important, because Peter in his sermon on the day of Pentecost quotes it and applies it to Christ. In Psalms the passage reads, "My flesh also shall rest in hope. For thou

wilt not leave my soul in hell (*sheol*), neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption." It is doubtful if in this last verse the first clause means more than the second. The poetic parallelism of the Hebrews is here apparent as elsewhere so often in the Psalms, and in the next reference.

Ps. xviii. 5. The sorrows of *hell* (*sheol*) compassed me about, the snares of death prevented [went before] me.

Ps. xlix. 15. But God will redeem my soul from the power of the *grave*, for he shall receive me.

Ps. lxxxviii. 11. Shall thy loving kindness be declared in the *grave*, or thy faithfulness in destruction.

Ps. lxxxix. 48. What man is he that liveth and shall not see death? Shall he deliver his soul from the hand of the *grave*?

Ps. lxiii. 9. But those that seek my soul to destroy it, shall go into the lower parts of the earth.

Ezekiel xxxii. 17-32 describes the destruction of various nations under the figure of being cast down unto the nether parts of the earth; and going down to the pit.

This, however, is sufficient to give an idea of the hopelessness of deriving from the Old Testament clear information regarding the intermediate state of the soul. The Old Testament certainly gives no countenance to the doctrine of a future proba-



tion. Throughout, the language is figurative and poetic, and generally sheol is represented as a place of gloominess.

The same is also true of *hades* in the New Testament. "Capernaum shall be brought down to *hades*" (Matt. xi. 23; Luke x. 15. "The gates of *hades* shall not prevail against the church" (Matt. xi. 23.) The rich man in the parable is in *hades*, where he lifted up his eyes being in torment. Lazarus is not, as Dr. Smyth supposes, in *hades*, but in Abraham's bosom, between which and the rich man there is an impassable gulf.

In 1 Cor. xv. 55, the best authorities now read: "O *death*," where we used to read, "O *grave* [*hades*] where is thy sting."

In four passages in Revelation (i. 18; vi. 8; xx. 13, 14), *death* and *hades* are personified where probably *hades* has about the same indefiniteness that *sheol* had in the Old Testament.

There remain Acts ii. 27 and 31, where Peter introduces into his sermon the quotation from Psalms xvi., to which we have referred. This is the only place where it can be alleged that there is a distinct statement that Christ's soul went to *hades*; and even here it might be pertinently urged that "soul," like "Holy One," in the next clause, refers to the whole human nature, and that the statement merely refers to the short time that Christ remained dead. If, however, any insist

upon saying that Christ's soul was in hades between death and the resurrection, they must believe that hades is the common receptacle for the dead, and that there are two compartments in it, — one for the righteous and another for the wicked. For as we have seen, the penitent thief was to be that day in paradise; and Lazarus was enjoying his reward in Abraham's bosom while the brethren of Dives were still alive; and Paul thought it better to depart and be with Christ than to remain longer in the world (Phil. i. 23). Further teachings of Scripture concerning the permanency of the state into which the soul enters at death, will be considered in the two following chapters. Meanwhile, we will attend to some arguments for a future probation drawn from the reason of the case.

II. It is evident, from even a cursory inspection of the passages adduced, that those who believe in a continuance of probation beyond the grave do not get their belief from Scripture. The texts appealed to are rather barges into which these bold speculators unload their *à priori* theories concerning the justice and mercy of God. Even if these passages, taken by themselves, are consistent with the idea of probation continued to the judgment day, still to say that they foreshadow this doctrine with any such clearness as warrants us to make it a basis of action or of hope, is pre-

posterior upon the face of it. The fact that Christ died for all men is consistent with the doctrine of universal salvation, but is no evidence of it.

What, then, are the general considerations concerning God's justice and mercy, which may be supposed to demand the hope of probation for some after death? We have not far to go to find them. Every thoughtful mind has been perplexed with the dark things, both in providence and in revelation.

To human view, the favors of God to men are very unequally distributed in this life. The privileges of some are far inferior to those granted to others. The forbearance of God toward some seems excessive; while others are cut off by death in the midst of their days, or before life is fairly begun. The imagination is impressed by the natural darkness and dearth of privileges in which the heathen dwell; and vast masses of grossly ignorant persons in the large cities of Christian lands, seem to have scarcely more light than the heathen. In view of these great inequalities in the condition of men, the sympathetic heart is oppressed with the fear that the ways of God cannot be justified if death be to all the end of probation; and so, for relief, recourse is had to the theory of a continued probation to such as have not, as is frequently said, had "a fair chance"

here. It is needless to deny the apparent force of these considerations ; but the doctrine of continued probation for the less favored does not go far to relieve the subject of its difficulties, while it raises some new ones peculiar to itself.

The thing which really baffles the understanding in all our efforts to justify the ways of God is, not the supposition that he *permits a certain amount* of sin and evil, but that, being both almighty and benevolent, he should have *permitted any sin and evil at all*. Knowing as we do that sin does exist to such a mournful extent, it is clear that we cannot sit in judgment upon the revealed methods of the Divine Ruler for circumscribing and checking the evils of it. No man is wise enough to say but that the most feasible method for arresting the rebellion of God's human subjects, is to limit the probation of all to this life. In these perplexities relief may most profitably be sought by reflecting upon the natural limitations to human knowledge, and upon the abundance of the Creator's resources, both of power and of wisdom, for equalizing matters as they are.

We are ignorant of what constitutes a fair trial for a moral being. We cannot penetrate the secrets of other hearts than our own, to know how great is the illumination vouchsafed them, both by nature and by grace. We sometimes hear *infants, idiots, and grossly ignorant persons* classed together

as equally needing the ameliorating hope of a future probation. Infants and idiots have indeed had no light, neither have they personal guilt. If, as we believe, God can, in the economy of his grace, directly transplant these souls to the more genial conditions of paradise, that fact cannot furnish an analogy from which to reason concerning the case of any persons who have attained to moral responsibility, even though they belong to the class denominated "grossly ignorant."

Almost inevitably we exaggerate the moral ignorance of men. The line of demarcation between the responsible and the irresponsible, and between the righteous and the wicked, is very sharply drawn. Man's knowledge of the moral law is not the product of the schools. Man's sense of right and wrong does not come by education. The voice of conscience in the human soul is the voice of God, and not of the schoolmaster. The distressing thing about the heathen, and the irreligious masses in Christian lands, is not so much that they are grossly ignorant, as that they are grossly wicked, and are sinning against such light of nature as they already possess.

This appears from the teaching of the Apostle Paul in the first chapter of Romans, where he affirms (vs. 18-25) that the unrighteous heathen whom he addressed were without excuse, because when they knew God through the light of nature

they did not glorify him as God, but voluntarily exchanged the truth of God for a lie. It is for this holding down of the truth in unrighteousness that sentence is passed upon men. The threatened punishment of sinners is not only for their rejection of the gospel, but for their transgression of the law.

We should be careful not to confound the administration of the law with that of grace. Under the law strict justice reigns. Opportunities and responsibilities are evenly balanced. Of those to whom much has been given much will be required. Those who have sinned against little light will be beaten with few stripes. We are ignorant of the resources at God's command for equalizing the condition of men under the law. The increased hazard involved in the added responsibility of greater privileges, may balance the apparent disadvantage of having less light and less responsibility. When we insist that every moral agent should have "a fair chance," we should first determine what is a fair chance, and then consider whether we are sure that every one does not have it already. We may take still higher ground, and affirm that every free moral agent has, in the *very fact* of his free moral agency, a perfectly fair chance for salvation.

Under the gospel, men have *more* than a fair chance. Mercy is brought to their doors and laid



at their feet. The offers of the gospel are *urged* upon men, and they are entreated to be reconciled to God through Christ. But all this occurs under a special dispensation of divine mercy. Under such an administration there are no grounds upon which to claim an *equal* share of attention to all. Beggars have no business to be choosers. It is in part the graciousness of the offer of salvation which gives to the gospel its power. It is in part the uncertainty whether further offers can be extended to us which makes those we have effective. We cannot, therefore, assume that God is to bestow upon all men an equal amount of persuasive influences. If all men were certain of having the truth urged upon them as it was urged upon Paul, inferior appeals would lose their power, and that higher degree of light would probably become ineffective. The *undeservedness* of God's offers of mercy, and the uncertainty that they can be repeated, are important elements in their motive power. We are too ignorant to assume that God can wisely do more for any sinful man in the world to come than he has done already for him in this. It is by no means inconceivable that the bestowal of persuasive influences upon one person beyond a certain limit may interfere with the persuasive influences God has in store for others. The hardening effect of delay in the execution of God's judgments is more than intimated in the

Bible : " Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil " (Eccl. viii. 11) .

The doctrine of endless punishment cannot but be a burden upon the sympathies of every thoughtful believer. The apprehension that the eternal destiny of some of our fellow-men may depend upon our own personal faithfulness in spreading the knowledge of the gospel, cannot fail to give added solemnity to the meaning of our earthly existence. The more spiritual members of the Christian church, like the apostle Paul, "have great heaviness and continual sorrow" of heart, because of the ineffectiveness of their efforts in evangelizing the world. Such may find consolation in thought of God's wisdom and love and power ; but we are not compelled to fathom the depths of the Creator's wisdom before we can believe him to be good. We cannot judge of the perfection of His plans by what we see of the results of His work. It is a relief to believe that infants and idiots may in God's mercy be saved without the hazard attending the ordinary probation of life. We are not compelled to hold that all the heathen are beyond the pale of God's mercy. We can emphasize the importance of adding to the persuasive influences which surround the heathen, without "disparaging those 'uncovenanted mercies' of the Lord which included within their influence



Melchisedec and Job, and the Wise Men of the East who brought offerings to the Babe of Bethlehem, and how many others we will not venture to say. Christianity is a supplementary revelation designed to give enlargement to moral forces already in some degree operative."

The Saviour reminds us that the geographical limits of probation are wider than those of the chosen people, and by implication wider than those of Christendom. Men may virtually accept or reject Christ, though never having heard his name. As much as this seems to be intimated in Matt. xxv. 31-46, where the nations express surprise at the judgment put upon them, and ask, "When saw we thee an hungered," etc. The Judge replies: "Inasmuch as ye did it unto these my brethren, even these least, ye did it unto me" (verse 40). When beholding the faith of the centurion, Jesus marvelled, and said he had not found so great faith in Israel, and told his disciples that many should come from the east and the west and sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven (Matt. viii. 10, 11). We need not deny that in dark regions some may perhaps be found who have followed the little light that came to them from him who lighteth every man who cometh into the world. "Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons; but in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteous-

ness, is acceptable to him" (Acts x. 34). "The men of Nineveh shall stand up in the judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it; for they repented at the preaching of Jonah." "The queen of the South shall rise up in the judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it; for she came from the ends of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon; and behold, a greater than Solomon is here" (Matt. xii. 41, 42). These passages serve not only to relieve somewhat the sombre picture elsewhere presented of the condition of the Gentile world, but join with those we shall mention later to warn us that the heathen have light enough to place them in a state of probation, and render them liable to the condemnation of the law.

Nor shall we know, this side eternity, to what extent God has blest the labors put forth, and heard the prayers put up, for those who have, to mortal eye, seemed impassive to all holy influences. What God in his mercy may do in the dying hour to persuade the sinner who has not too far resisted his grace, is more than any mortal can take upon himself to tell. It is not for us to consign any man to eternal torment. To God must every man render his account.

Nor should we limit the Almighty's power to mete out endless punishment according to desert. From earliest times it has been allowable to regard

the material representations of future punishment (such as the quenchless fire and the undying worm) as figurative of mental anguish. Indeed the changed condition of our bodies after the resurrection would seem to compel this view. The endlessness of the punishment does not prevent its gradation. There are unnumbered ways in which God can adjust an endless penalty in strict accordance with the deserts of the person incurring it. We may not know all the methods by which an almighty being can temper suffering to the strength of the sufferer. It is a mathematical truth that an infinite series may make only a finite sum, and that infinite series may differ infinitely in their total amounts. However inscrutable this may seem to us, we may at any rate rest in the positive statements of scripture that the punishments of the future world are graded according to desert. He that has sinned against little light shall be beaten with few stripes. To whom much has been given, of him much will be required (Luke xii. 47, 48). The Saviour intimates that Tyre and Sidon would have repented under the privileges granted to Galilean cities; but he promises Tyre and Sidon not a further probation, but a less severe judgment (Matt. xi. 21; Luke x. 13, 14). Even Sodom and Gomorrah shall find it more tolerable in the day of judgment than those who reject his

messengers. Thus is divine justice maintained, and not by giving another probation.

In times when faith falters, and the reality of God's presence is obscured, we are also frequently oppressed with the apparently accidental occurrence of death, and thus the close of man's probation seems to be occasioned by what we call the "accident of death." But in our hours of clearer vision we perceive that death is never an accident. Not a sparrow falls without our Heavenly Father; and he has numbered the very hairs of our head. From man the day of his death is wisely concealed. How important this uncertainty may be as a controlling motive to human conduct, only God can tell.

Nor can it be from modern science that the hope of probation continuing after death has been gaining strength in these latter days; for there are no analogies of nature favoring the idea of an equalization of advantages to sinful men. Law reigns supreme in nature, and its behests are inexorable. Whatever living organization gets out of harmony with its environment is irretrievably doomed.\* Whatever of hope there is in the world comes through the mercy of God, as revealed in the gospel. This brings us back to the inquiry, What is the plan of divine redemption? On what principles of wisdom are the favors of the gospel be-

\* See the author's "Studies in Science and Religion," chap. v., W. F. Draper, 1882.

stowed? What limits has God, in the fulness of his knowledge, set to the probation of his rebellious subjects?

Where there are no facts to restrain the fancy, it is as easy for one to theorize as it is difficult for another to demonstrate the falsity of the theory. But, fortunately, we have some facts of revelation, if not from nature, to guide us in our speculations concerning the continuance of probation in a future life. To these we will attend in the following chapter.

## CHAPTER III.

### SCRIPTURE TEACHING WHICH MUST BE EXPLAINED AWAY, IF THERE IS PROBATION AFTER DEATH.

EVANGELICAL Protestant churches have from the first been united in believing that the eternal destiny of man is determined by his character at death ; and, as we have already said, the Catholic doctrine of purgatory does not imply a continuance of probation after death, but only a perfecting of the regenerate character already entered upon.\* The practical unanimity of the church in all ages upon this point has not arisen solely from the silence of the Scriptures, nor from mere negative testimony ; although the hazard is so serious that if there were but a lingering doubt that death is the end of probation, we might well as reasonable beings act as if the evidence were positive.

The Scriptures are not, however, altogether silent upon the question ; but both directly and by

\* For proof of this statement, see Dr. Pusey's *What is of Faith as to Everlasting Punishment ?* pp. 6, 17, 106, 191.

implication, upon any fair interpretation, raise the fear, if they do not compel the positive belief, that the eternal future of every man is staked upon his conduct here.

The first passage to which attention is directed in proof of this proposition is 2 Cor. v. 10 : " For we must all be made manifest before the judgment-seat of Christ, that each one may receive *the things done in the body* according to what he hath done whether it be good or bad." This may well be considered in connection with the twenty-fifth chapter of Matthew, where the same judgment-seat here referred to is described as that before which all nations are to be gathered, and from which the righteous are to depart into eternal life, and the wicked into eternal punishment. In this case it is expressly said that we shall receive according to what *we have done in the body*; while in Matthew also, the deeds for which the nations are eternally rewarded or eternally punished, are such as could be performed only in the body.

The next passage which we will consider is the parable of the rich man and Lazarus (Luke xvi. 19-31). This is so familiar that we do not need to quote it in full. We note, however, that Abraham reminds the rich man that the difference between his condition and that of Lazarus is owing to what was done during their *lifetime* (vs. 25), and adds, "between us and you there is a great gulf fixed, that



they which would pass from hence to you may not be able, and that none may cross over from thence to us" (vs. 26). It should be observed that in this verse it is stated not only that the gulf is impassable to human pity, so that those in Abraham's bosom cannot go over to aid those who are in torment, but that it is a divine ordinance that none of those in the torment of the future world may cross over to "Abraham's bosom." To render the importance of the earthly probation still more impressive, Abraham (vs. 29-31) declines to send supernatural messengers to the earth to warn the brethren of Dives, but says they must walk by the light they have. "They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them." It is worthy of note, also, that Dives asks no favors for himself, except some slight amelioration of his condition. It does not seem to enter his mind to request for himself what he asks for his brethren. The force of these statements is not diminished by the fact that they occur in a parable; for these are by no means subsidiary portions of the parable. On the contrary, they are the very points upon which the teaching of the parable turns.

We consider next the second chapter of Romans. Here we are told (vs. 6-11) that God "will render to every man according to his works; to them that by patience in well-doing seek for glory and honor

and incorruption, eternal life ; but unto them that are factious, and obey not the truth, but obey unrighteousness, shall be wrath and indignation, tribulation and anguish, upon every soul of man that worketh evil, of the Jew first, and also of the Greek ; but glory and honor and peace to every man that worketh good, to the Jew first and also to the Greek : for there is no respect of persons with God." This teaches as explicitly as language well can teach, that the ground upon which judgment is passed upon men is not alone their rejection of the special light of positive revelation in the Bible ; but, as in the first chapter of this Epistle, the truth is emphasized that the Gentiles are judged for their sin against the light of nature. Their probation is under the law of nature. In the five following verses (vs. 12-16) there are some phrases hard to be understood ; but it can scarcely be questioned that they re-affirm, in positive terms, the doctrine that the condemnation of men at the judgment-day is for sins committed under such light as they had in this world. Verse 12 reads, "For as many as have sinned without law shall also perish without law." If in this case "law" means the law revealed to the Jews, then of course the reference is to a condemnation under the law of nature, such as is indicated in the first chapter. If, on the other hand, "law" is used in this verse in its general sense, then the word "without" must

be interpreted rhetorically as meaning *comparatively* without; *i. e.*, he who has sinned against comparatively few privileges shall be judged accordingly. It is thus, without doubt, that we are to interpret the Saviour's words in Luke xii. 48, to which we have already alluded, where our Lord asserts that he who knew not his master's will, and did things worthy of stripes, should be beaten with few stripes; adding that "to whomsoever much is given, of him shall much be required." It is evident that in both these cases *some* knowledge of law is presupposed.

If any doubt still lingers that the apostle regarded the Gentiles as having their probation in this life, it is dissipated by the 14th, 15th, and 16th verses of this second chapter of Romans, "For when Gentiles which have no law [*i. e.*, no written law] do by nature the things of the law, these having no law [*i. e.*, no written law], are a law [*i. e.*, a real law] unto themselves: in that they show the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience bearing witness therewith, and their thoughts one with another accusing or else excusing them; in the day when God shall judge the secrets of men, according to my gospel, by Jesus Christ." All this justifies the fearful teaching of the first chapter concerning the sin of the Gentile world, where the sins enumerated are sins of mankind committed

in a state of nature rather than under the light of the gospel.

We have already referred to the teaching of this chapter concerning the degree of light enjoyed by men even in a state of nature, but the passage is so important and suggestive that we must recur to it. We need, however, do little more than quote the words themselves. Verses 18 and 19 assert that God has manifested himself to the heathen, and that in their wickedness they are resisting truth revealed in their very nature. "For the invisible things of him since the creation of the world are clearly seen, being perceived through the things that are made, even his everlasting power and divinity; that they may be [or so that they are] without excuse; because that, knowing God, they glorified him not as God, neither gave thanks, but became vain in their reasonings, and their senseless heart was darkened" (vs. 20, 21). In verse 23, they are said to have "*changed* the glory of the incorruptible God for the likeness of an image of corruptible man;" in verse 25, to have "*exchanged* the truth of God for a lie," and to have "worshipped and served the creature rather than the Creator;" in verses 26 and 27, the women are said to have "*changed* the natural use into that which is against nature," and so of the men, and all are declared to have received "that recompense of their error which was due;" in verse 28,

their being given up to a reprobate mind is said to be because "they *refused* to have God in their knowledge." All this seems to teach most clearly that men have probation under the light of nature as well as under the light of the gospel.

Another passage, which, on any fair interpreting, implies that probation terminates with death, is Heb. ix. 27, "It is appointed unto men once to die, and after this cometh judgment."

The implication, so strong in this verse, that man's final judgment is to be according to his character at death, is, in another form, still more impressive in John viii. 21, 24. Jesus said, "therefore, again unto them, I go away, and ye shall seek me, *and shall die in your sin*: whither I go ye cannot come. . . . I am from above: ye are of this world: I am not of this world. I said therefore unto you that ye shall *die in your sins*: for except ye believe that I am he, ye shall *die in your sins*." The dying in a state of sin seems here to be the finality. At any rate, death must mark the entrance to a state of great comparative disadvantage, otherwise there is no force to the warning. That such warnings were understood by the early Christians to refer to a finality of condition, will appear more plainly from some things which follow both in this chapter and in the next.

Leaving now for a little the discussion of

isolated passages, we may profitably turn to some of the broader considerations bearing upon the subject. We ask, therefore, What impression concerning the limitations to human probation is made by the general tenor and tone of the Scriptures?

Perhaps the most difficult fact, on the whole, to explain away, if the apostles believed there was a probation after death, is their anxiety to preach the gospel to living men. If God's administration of his government in this world is one with that in the next, in such a sense that the gifts of grace which have not been bestowed upon some here may be conferred in the world to come, there would seem to be little occasion for the consuming missionary zeal which characterized the apostles and the early Church. The facts are too familiar to need repeating. The personal labors which Paul recounts in the eleventh chapter of Second Corinthians are fair specimens of those endured by a great multitude of early believers in their anxiety to preach the gospel. Foremost among the five causes to which the historian of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire\* ascribes the early triumphs of Christianity over the heathen world is "the inflexible, and if we may use the expression, the 'intolerant zeal of the Christians,' derived, as

\* See the celebrated fifteenth chapter of Gibbon's "Roman Empire."



he supposes, from the Jewish religion, but purified from its narrow and unsocial spirit.

Whence came the special form in which this zeal manifested itself? Every one must, and does, admit that the zeal of the early Church was peculiarly practical and unselfish. It was kindled from the altar of Christ's sacrificial love, and was in close imitation of his example. The solicitude of the primitive Church was altogether free from the expectation of self-aggrandizement. Their earthly reward was obloquy, stripes, imprisonment, and the tortures of martyrdom, and yet these lonely missionaries traversed every sea, and penetrated every continent, to proclaim the riches of Christ's salvation. They testified in kings' houses; and as faithful soldiers in the ranks of the Roman armies, carried the glad news wherever the tread of the imperial legions was heard.

The fervor of this missionary zeal is scarcely explicable, unless the apostles and the early Church had believed that the issues of the world to come are staked upon men's conduct here. It cannot be doubted that the primitive Christians looked upon the most of the heathen as irrecoverably lost, unless they could be persuaded *in this life* to accept the gospel. Gibbon, in the chapter above referred to, truly supposes that it was their power to produce this conviction in the hearts of their hearers which gave the early missionaries



such success. The fact, that the early Christians cherished this belief so strongly, is pretty good evidence that it is both a natural and a legitimate deduction not only from specific texts of the New Testament, but also, and perhaps still more, from the broader outlines of the divine system of truth there revealed.

The incarnation of Christ gives untold significance to all the actions of mankind. The divine Word, who was in the beginning with God, and was God, and by whom all things were made, and without whom was nothing made that was made, became flesh and dwelt among us. He who was in the form of God, and counted it not robbery to be equal with God, made himself of no reputation, and took upon him "the form of a servant, being made in the likeness of men; and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, becoming obedient even unto death, yea, the death of the cross" (John i. 1-18, and Phil. ii. 6-8). This conception of Christ and his mission to the world is transcendent and tragic in the extreme. What does it mean that God has thus manifested himself under the limitations of time and space? Are we to infer from it that offers of pardon are to be extended indefinitely, and that all men are to be saved? Thus some would have us believe; while others, though not going to this length, would infer that the love of God in Christ naturally leads us

to expect, or (if that is too strong a word) to *hope* that every man will have a probation not only under the law, but under a distinct and clear presentation of Christ. Others still, and we confess ourselves among the number, are overawed in view of Christ's atonement by the revelation it gives of the mystery of sin and of the difficulties attending its restraint and cure. The incarnation of Christ shows that in bestowing our actual nature upon us God has limited himself to certain restricted lines of influencing and governing us. Christ came to a point in space, and manifested himself at a particular period of time. Thus Christianity is a *historical* religion. In the fulness of time the Saviour came, after protracted preparation, and as the consummate flower in a long line of supernatural history. His light is more than the diffused light of primeval chaos. Christ is the Sun of righteousness, to whose beams men must be *brought* for healing.

The extent to which Christ has committed to human agencies the work of spreading the gospel is most impressive, and even startling. As when, during the weary years of his ministry in Judea, he healed none unless they came to him, or were *brought* to him, so now he waits for the co-operation of human agency; he calls the fishermen by the seaside to forsake their nets and become "fishers of men"; at all hours of the day

he urges men to go into his vineyard and work. The members of the church of Christ are exalted to the position of being co-workers with their Master. "Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. How, then," says the apostle (Rom. x. 14 *et seq.*), "shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in him whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach, except they be sent? Even as it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that bring glad tidings of good things!"

This exaltation of human agencies in the spread of the gospel is the crowning mystery of all. Christ chose twelve apostles, and called them "fishers of men." He likened the kingdom of heaven to leaven, which spreads from a definite centre, and from particle to particle. And again, the kingdom of heaven is like a grain of mustard seed, which has an orderly growth, until it becomes like a tree with waving branches. The gospel is extended through the instrumentality of preaching, and its truth is perpetuated through the organization and ordinances of the church. The effusion of the Holy Spirit upon the day of Pentecost was in connection with the preaching of Peter, and in answer to the long-continued prayers of all the disciples. Even the great apostle to the

Gentiles earnestly craved the prayers of the church to aid him in preaching the gospel.

It is possible that the early martyrs and the faithful of all times have misinterpreted this apparent determination of Christ to depend upon the co-operation of human agencies for the spread of the gospel. But, so far in history, the truth of the gospel has been disseminated mainly by those who have thus interpreted the sacred word. In their privileges and in the strength of the motives urging to a righteous life, Christian lands differ from others mainly through the blessing of God upon the personal labors of his children. We are taught to believe that even Sodom would have been spared if ten righteous men had resided there.

Why there is this apparent dependence of the Almighty upon the co-operation of human agencies, we cannot hope fully to know. It is, however, to us one of the indications of the greatness of the human soul, and of the fact that God has, in his infinite wisdom, limited himself to some *orderly method* of maintaining the interests of his kingdom. Our ignorance is a bar to further speculation. To learn the divine plan of salvation we must go to the Scriptures. If God does not in this world miraculously reveal the gospel to the heathen, we have no assurance that it will be wise for him to do it in another world. Certainly the

conduct of the apostles, and of the early Church, was as if they believed the salvation of the world depended upon their activity. The piety of the early Church did not take on the form of dreamy sentimentality so characteristic of the monasticism of later ages, but the form of intense solicitude for the salvation of men, and of untiring activity in carrying the gospel to them. Not only did the early Christians *believe* that the mass of the heathen would perish eternally if the gospel were not preached to them, but they found in the heathen a *conscience answering* to that belief; indeed, all along the history of the Christian church, the sense of ill-desert among the heathen has been so pronounced that they have responded to the preaching of the gospel not as to a message which they had a right to *demand* of their Creator, but as to a message on God's part of superabounding grace; though not infrequently the converted heathen have expressed just astonishment at the indifference to their condition manifested in nominally Christian lands.

When oppressed with the fear that the adult masses of the heathen world are dying without hope, we should naturally redouble our own missionary zeal; and then, when we have done our utmost, we may reflect upon the probability that the world is yet in its infancy, and that the Christian church has it in its power to carry the gospel, with all its quickening influences, to every benighted

human soul before the close of another half century. If, now, in this incipient stage of the history of redemption, faith is disturbed by the apparent smallness of the number who enter upon the path to everlasting life, she is permitted to look forward to the times, which we may hope are not far distant, when the divine plan shall be more fully developed, and the forces of the gospel shall be more fully operative in all the world. May the glowing words of prophecy be speedily realized, when the abundance of the sea shall be converted unto God, when a little one shall become a thousand, and from the rising of the sun to the going down of the same the Lord's name shall be great among the Gentiles.

We will not find fault with that divine wisdom which throws upon the Church in very fact the responsibility of converting the world. How much depth of meaning this is destined to give to man's immortal existence is more than we dare attempt to tell. The solicitude drawn out by this measure of man's responsibility for his fellows may, in the divine economy, be one of the important means of securing the moral stability of the future. As with the eye of reason we glance at the possibilities of the illimitable future, we dare not take it upon us to criticize God's plan of salvation while yet unfolding; nor can we undertake to estimate the good which may come to the universe through compelling the Church to assume the



responsibility of evangelizing the world. The value of the character developed by evangelical missionary labor cannot probably be exaggerated.

Far be it from us to say, that the unaided reason of man could have seen beforehand, or can now fully comprehend, the wisdom of such a plan as God has entered upon for the building up of his everlasting kingdom; but when the salient features of the plan are revealed in the combined light of history, conscience, and the Word of God, it is allowable to comfort our faith by those poetic visions of the good which God, in the plenitude of his wisdom, may yet bring out of seeming evil, and by considering the ways in which it is possible for God to justify his dealings with the human race. The mystery of evil is anyhow so great that we bow in reverence before whatever the divine revelation says concerning God's method of controlling it and making it conduce to his own glory and to the highest good of his sentient creatures. And we cannot but deem it a wholesome principle of interpretation, that, if there be doubt as to the meaning of scripture, we should incline to that explanation which makes man sensible of the weight of his personal responsibility for the spread of the gospel. To us the warning given to the prophet Ezekiel still retains its full force. He was told that if he saw his brother committing sin and neglected to warn him, and he



perished in his sin, the blood of his brother should be required at his hands. So in the New Testament we are told (Jas. v. 20) "that he who converteth a sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death and shall cover a multitude of sins." In this light also we had regarded the words of the Apostle Paul to the elders of Ephesus (Acts xx. 26, 27), "Wherefore I testify unto you this day, that I am pure from the blood of all men. For I shrank not from declaring unto you the whole counsel of God."

But the off-hand manner in which some persons would explain away certain proof-texts adduced in the earlier part of this chapter and introduce a meaning less burdensome to the conscience, bids us move with caution, and reminds us of a great number of other texts whose meaning we shall be called upon to tone down to suit a less heroic spirit than that of the apostolic age, or, indeed, than that which gives impulse to the missionary enterprises of modern times.

We had been accustomed to think that the words of Christ to Peter (Matt. xvi. 19), while not warranting the Romish doctrine of the primacy of Peter and his supposed successors, yet did lay a real and serious burden upon the hearts of the Church. "I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven; and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven; and what-

soever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven." While we must believe both from reason and scripture that such of the heathen as welcome the light they have, will be saved through the sacrifice of Christ, whose name they never heard, yet we are also constrained to fear that the fate of the masses of the heathen is dependent upon the faithfulness of the Church in carrying the gospel to them. The increased motives leading to repentance which accompany the spread of the gospel, are indeed the keys of the kingdom of heaven. If believers deny the lamp of life to those who are in darkness, or refrain from doing their utmost to pass on to them the inheritance of gospel light, we were taught by pious parents and devout instructors to suppose that the consequences were most serious, and to fear that they were irretrievable. What does this mean, that whatever is bound or loosed *on earth*, shall be bound or loosed *in heaven*? What if the exigencies of God's government are such that the indifference of the Church involves a real denial of the gospel to many generations of heathen? Will it then avail to ask "Am I my brother's keeper?"

We had thought, too, that the light of the gospel was a *gift of grace* which the Lord, in the exercise of His infinite wisdom and superlative goodness, had a right to dispense as seemed to Him best; and that no man whose heart was at all enlightened

had any occasion to complain if, upon resisting that light, increased privileges should be denied him. This had seemed to us to be in general the teaching of the parable of the laborers (Matt. xx. 1-16), and of the talents (Matt. xxv. 14-30). When so great a being as man has had a real probation under a low degree of light, can he complain if others have more than he? Is man to determine how long the forbearance of God shall wait upon him? Is not God to be allowed to distribute His own gifts? Can those who have but one talent suffer it to lie idle with impunity, on the plea that others have received ten talents? We were taught, and it was a powerful motive constraining us to repentance, that God could justify Himself in cutting us off in our sins without hope, even though our privileges had been less than those enjoyed by others. If the wicked are instructed that all are to be made equal in privileges with the most favored (and that is what the idea of a continued probation really amounts to in the view of many), how will they ever be roused from their lethargy until it is proved to them that God has done for them not merely all that He *wisely* can, in due regard for the other interests He is conserving, but all that He *absolutely* could?

Again, we had been taught that the warnings and exhortations in Matt. xxiv. and xxv. conveyed

by implication the thought that every man, if unfaithful to any trust which God had committed to him, was in danger of having his probation closed suddenly. The householder was to come back at an unexpected time and judge the servants as their character should be. The bridegroom was to come at an unexpected hour, and then the door was to be shut.\* We had supposed that these parables, being so close to that of the talents, should be a warning to all sinful men, however small their light, that they were living on the Lord's forbearance, and could not complain if their probation were closed at any moment.

We had been taught that the Holy Spirit was poured out upon men in answer to prayer, and that "the effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much." If this be so, and God is free to use means for the salvation of men who die in their sin, why do we not pray for the *wicked* dead? This is a question that is worth while for those to ponder who believe both in prayer and in a probation after death. The fact is, that our deepest instincts, as well as the general tone of Scripture, warn us not to confuse the administration of this world with that of the next. We must work for the salvation of men while the day lasts, for the

\* We are bound to state, however, that in the view of some these parables refer to the judgment of the church rather than to that of the world.

night (the popular interpolation here "of death" is not so far out of the way as it might be) cometh when no man can work.

There are, as we know, those whose principles of interpretation lead them invariably to soften the meaning of the solemn warnings of our Lord concerning the punishment of sin, and to diminish our sense of the urgency of the crises of this present life. Such explain away to their own satisfaction even the teaching of the parable of the rich man and Lazarus, with the remark that though the rich man is left suffering without possibility of help from Lazarus or Abraham, yet the parable does not teach that the gulf impassable to human pity could not be crossed by the divine mercy. To the ordinary reader, however, it must seem that to evade the plain teaching of this parable by such a process of interpretation, involves the virtual abandonment of language as a means of conveying thought. Just complaint is made in some quarters that in interpreting the language of Scripture upon the subject of future punishment many unwarranted additions have been made. On the other hand, we should bear in mind that there is equal danger of emptying the scriptural language concerning future punishment of its solemn significance. The same command of inspiration which warns the reader of the Apocalypse against *adding* unto "the words of the

prophecy of this book" lest "God shall add unto him the plagues which are written in this book" says also that "if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part from the tree of life, and out of the holy city, which are written in this book." It is incumbent upon us to keep both these warnings in mind; and therefore it is that we dare not turn for comfort to any view of the future world which compels us to explain away so much of Scripture as we must do if we hold to the doctrine of a probation after death.

## CHAPTER IV.

### ARE THE AWARDS OF THE JUDGMENT DAY ENDLESS?

IN the two preceding chapters we have been considering the specific question whether the probation begun in this world is, in the case of any class of persons, extended beyond death; and have concluded that there is no warrant in Scripture for supposing that the issues of the judgment at the end of the world are different in kind from those at death. There still remains for consideration the question whether the awards of the judgment day are absolutely final, and whether the conscious state into which the soul then enters is endless in its duration.

Ordinarily the doctrine of everlasting punishment has been supposed to have only two rival theories, viz., that of the final restoration of all to holiness and happiness, and that of the annihilation of the incorrigibly wicked. We are now, however, compelled to consider a third hypothesis, according to which the element of time does not enter into the problem, and in which much is



made of a distinction between the words *eternal* and *everlasting*. Eternal and its correlative words in other languages are said not to be *time*-words when used of punishment in the Bible, but to be expressive of *quality* rather than continuance.

Under ordinary circumstances, it would not be worth while seriously to discuss so obvious a matter. But when authors with the reputation of F. D. Maurice, Canon Farrar, and Rev. Drs. Whiton and Smyth, get the public ear in defence of the proposition that there is a vast difference between *eternal* punishment and *everlasting* punishment, we are forced to pause and inquire what new considerations they are able to bring forward bearing upon this subject, and what resetting they are able to give to the familiar objections urged against the doctrine of everlasting punishment.

We do not propose to enter into a personal controversy with these writers; but perhaps there is no better method of getting the questions at issue before us than to consider and weigh at the outset the arguments which they have put forth with so much zeal in proof of their propositions.

Maurice \* affirms that our Lord "has deliberately excluded" the "notion of duration" from the word eternal; and that life eternal is simply to know God, and death eternal simply to be

\* Essays, p. 436.

without God. Canon Farrar, speaking of the word in the Bible ordinarily translated "eternal," tells us that in the phrases "eternal life" and "eternal punishment" we mean by it "*something above and beyond time*, time being simply a mode of thought necessary only to our finite condition,"\* and that "the utter dearth of metaphysical knowledge renders most people incapable of realizing a condition which is independent of time, — a condition which crushes eternity into an hour, and extends an hour into eternity."† Dr. Whiton has two or three paths by which he gets around the obstacle to his faith presented by the doctrine of endless punishment. First, he holds that the word ordinarily translated "eternal," but which he transfers directly from the Greek and calls *æonian* (from *αιώνιος*) does not mean absolutely without end, but only *age-long*; secondly, that "æonian [eternal] life *primarily* denotes a certain *kind* of life," and that æonian punishment is "of a certain *kind* rather than of a certain *length*,"‡ adding upon the next page that "the doctrine that the punishments of the future are endless, is not clearly announced by divine revelation."

Dr. Newman Smyth § declares that Jesus used

\* *Eternal Hope*, p. 200. The Canon should explain how man can be in anything but a *finite* condition.

† *Ibid.*, p. 199.

‡ *Is Eternal Punishment Endless?* p. 48.

§ *The Orthodox Theology of To-day*, pp. 118-123.

the terms "eternal" and "everlasting" as "words of great suggestion, but not to be measured by us in any terms of duration," adding that Jesus "did not gather together the years, and heap up ages upon ages, in order that by a mere human imagination of time indefinitely expanded and prolonged, he might appall them, and for aught we know utterly mislead them as to what the reality of eternal existence shall be — that final state of existence when the angel shall proclaim that time shall be no longer." In other clauses Dr. Smyth is still more sweeping in his assertions. "The Bible nowhere attempts to represent eternity by a succession of periods of time indefinitely prolonged" (p. 120). "There is absolutely no justification in Scripture for the crude metaphysics, the vain and painful fiction, of the once too customary theological massing of times and multiplication of the ages, to represent the thought of Jesus in his solemn words, tremulous with meanings beyond meanings — eternal life, eternal sin" (p. 121).

The lack of caution displayed by Dr. Smyth in the confident assertions we have just quoted will appear as a little later we consider a few passages of Scripture. We must, however, introduce the quotations with the remark that the adjectives *endless* and *everlasting* mean substantially the same thing, but they define unlimited extension in time by opposite methods. Endless is negative in its

signification, while everlasting does as much as any word can to express the idea positively. But since human language has its origin in human experience, it must always labor under difficulties, and exhibit its inherent infirmity whenever an attempt is made to express ideas which are above and beyond experience. Infinity both in time and in space necessarily surpasses the experience of finite beings, and the idea of it which is clear enough in every man's mind can only be represented by the use of terms which themselves are finite. *Infinite* means literally *not* finite or *without* bounds. *Endless* means *without* end. If we speak of *endless* duration we express the idea in mind by a *denial* of limitation to time in the direction in which we are looking, whether it be to the future or to the past; while if we speak of *everlasting* duration we express the idea by setting the mind to viewing a movement that naturally goes on for ever.

This is in all languages the ordinary way of expressing the idea of unlimited time. *For ever* ordinarily means for all future time; and yet we strengthen it by reduplication, saying, *for ever* and *ever*. What we really do in this case is to start the mind off more vigorously upon an infinite series, as when we say time will move *on* and *on* and *on* without end.

We cannot indeed comprehend eternity by any of these attempted measurements, but we do en-

large our conception of it, and make the thought more vivid to our imaginations. This inability to compass eternity, however, does not indicate that time is absent from the conception of eternity. Periods of time are indeed inadequate exponents of eternity, but they are the only exponents we have, and it ill becomes us to cast them away as useless. Existence through endless time is not the same as timeless existence. To say that duration is infinite is not the same as to affirm that duration is nothing at all.

But we had started to test the accuracy of Dr. Smyth's assertion that "There is absolutely no justification in Scripture for the crude metaphysics, the vain and painful fiction, of the once too customary theological massing of times and multiplication of the ages, to represent the thought of Jesus respecting eternal life and eternal sin."

Now so far is this from being true that we should say it was just the opposite of the truth. The writers of the Bible, like other men, when they speak of eternity at all, speak of it in terms of time, and frequently attempt to make the impression more vivid by reduplicating the longest time words they had.

According to the best standard authorities, both ancient and modern, the English word *ever* comes from the same root with the Greek *αἰών* (*æon*). The corresponding words in Latin and German are

*ævum* and *ewig*, from the same Sanscrit root (*éva*). In all these languages these are essentially time words, and if they express quality do so by a metaphorical use which we will explain a little later. The English word *age* is a derivative from *ævum*. Whether αἰών means *age* or *ever* depends upon the connection. We will first notice the efforts of the sacred writers to express and intensify their conception of eternity by use of the Greek noun αἰών (*æon*), and its correspondents in Hebrew.

The first use of αἰών (*æon*) in Greek literature is to denote the lifetime of a man viewed as something continued. This is the prevailing use in Homer and all the early writers, who seem to have had no occasion to express the conception of unlimited time. From this idea of continuance the word came to denote *indefinite* duration and then *unlimited* duration. A fair example of the latter occurs in the writings of Isocrates (about 350 B.C.), who speaks of certain hopes which are "pleasant both concerning the end of their life and all *eternity*" (Panegyrics, 28, Sandys' translation). Again, a little later, Plato (Timæus, 38, A), contrasts χρόνος and αἰών as we do *time* and *eternity*. The same use is unmistakable in Aristotle (Metaphysics xiv. 7), where he says that "continuous and endless *eternity* (αἰών) belongs to God."

Now in the New Testament the reduplication of the plural of this word αἰών (*æon*) is frequently



employed to express the idea of everlasting duration. It makes little difference in this connection whether the Greek word is supposed to mean *ever* or *age*, — the effect is essentially the same.

The Greek phrase (*εἰς τοὺς αἰῶνας τῶν αἰώνων*) usually translated, "for ever and ever," is uniformly translated in the margin of the revised English version of the New Testament, "unto the ages of the ages."

This phrase occurs in ascribing glory to God, which certainly is conceived of as everlasting. Thus Gal. i. 5: "To whom [God] be the glory for ever and ever [for the ages of ages]"; Eph. iii. 21: "To him [God] be the glory . . . unto all generations for ever and ever [generations of the ages of the ages]." The phrase is found in similar ascriptions in Phil. iv. 20; 1 Tim. i. 17; 2 Tim. iv. 18; Heb. xiii. 21; 1 Peter iv. 11; v. 11; Rev. i. 6; vii. 12. The same phrase occurs in passages declaring that God or Christ lives for *ever* and *ever*, or to the ages of the ages, in Rev. i. 18; iv. 9, 10; x. 6; xv. 7. The same phrase is also used in Rev. xxii. 5, where it is said that the righteous "shall reign for ever and ever," and in Rev. xiv. 11; xix. 3; xx. 10, where the punishment of the devil or of the wicked is said to continue for ever and ever, or unto ages of ages.

The Old Testament usage is even more impressive. The word עֹלָם (*olam*) means by itself



ordinarily an indefinite extension of time to which no limit is visible and so, when alone, often symbolizes eternity. Not content with this, however, the Hebrew writers frequently attempted to make the conception more vivid. This they did in four or five ways. *First*, The Hebrews reduplicated the word *olam* just as we do our *ever*; as for example in Neh. ix. 5, Stand up and bless the Lord *for ever* and *ever* (*min ha olam adh ha olam*). Literally from everlasting to everlasting, where the whole transaction is regarded as future. The corresponding phrase in 1 Chron. xvi. 36, and Psalms xli. 13, may refer to eternity past and eternity to come, but probably is parallel with this from Nehemiah. But in Daniel the corresponding Chaldee phrase occurs more than once where the reference is to the future. See Dan. ii. 20 ; vii. 18, "The saints . . . shall possess the kingdom for ever, even for ever and ever."

*Secondly*, the Hebrews intensified the conception by adding to *olam* another word (עד *adh*) which originally meant perpetuity, and by natural consequence came to mean eternity. Thus Ex. xv. 18, "The Lord shall reign *for ever* and *ever*," is, literally, to unbounded duration and perpetuity (לְעֹלָם וָעֶד *le olam vaedh*). So also Ps. ix. 5 ; x. 16 ; xxi. 4 ; xlv. 6, "Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever;" xlv. 17 ; xlviii. 14, etc., etc. Isa. xxx. 8 ; Dan. xii. 3 ; Mic. iv. 5.

A *third* rhetorical device resorted to by the writers of the Old Testament in order to make the idea of eternity impressive, was that of putting *olam* into the plural number. Thus in Isaiah xxvi. 4, we read, Trust ye in the Lord for ever; for in the Lord Jehovah is everlasting strength. Literally the rock of eternities (*olams*). So also xlv. 17; Psalms cxlv. 13, Thy kingdom is an everlasting kingdom [a kingdom of all eternities] and thy dominion endureth throughout all generations. (This last expression represents the reduplication of still another Hebrew word which not unfrequently occurs. It is literally to every generation and generation. So Ps. 146, 10.) See among other places for a capital instance, Dan. ix. 24.

A *fourth* mode employed by Isaiah for intensifying the conception of eternity was by putting *olam* into the plural depending on *adh* in the genitive, as though we should say the unbounded durations of perpetuity, or the fathomless abysses of eternity. Thus, in Isaiah xlv. 17, we have in addition to the instance of the plural of *olam* for which it was quoted in the preceding paragraph, the expression we are considering in this. But Israel shall be saved in the Lord with an everlasting salvation [a salvation of unbounded durations]; ye shall not be ashamed nor confounded world without end, literally, to the unbounded durations of perpetuity.

This makes it sufficiently clear that the sacred writers by no means abstained from heaping time-measures one upon another in their efforts to impress the vastness of eternity upon their readers. That is just what they did, and in doing it they manifested a delicate sense of what is rhetorically effective. The indefiniteness of the *æons* which the inspired teachers massed together, adds to the impressiveness of their utterances upon this point. The exact terms of modern mathematics fetter the imagination rather than aid it in its conception of eternity. The multiplication of indefinite periods of time to enlarge the idea is even more impressive than the multiplication of definite periods.

To talk of conscious finite beings as having *timeless* existence is to use words without meaning. We can indeed conceive of God in his infinite knowledge as always viewing both the past and the future in their entirety. He can, for example, *perfectly* interpret the action of cosmical forces, and from them unravel completely the past and unfold the future. To the Divine intelligence the past and the future are ever present, and are visible not in the perspective which finite beings must give to them, but in one foreshortened glance. To some extent man can in thought overcome the limitations of space, and make the past seem present and obtain dim visions of the future.

But however much he may enlarge his cycles of movement, man is, by the very fact of the finiteness of his mind, *still in time*. To speak of a finite being as in "a condition which crushes an eternity into an hour and extends an hour into eternity" is to use language poetically rather than philosophically. Eternity cannot be emptied of its meaning by any such process as that. Even in dreams duration seems not less than in waking hours, but greater. Rev. x. 6, "There shall be time no longer," probably means, as is indicated in the margin of the revised New Testament, "There shall be *delay* no longer," as when we say, "you have no more time."

It would seem that the very attempts of the inspired writers to intensify the conception of eternity give occasion for another class of doubts concerning the meaning of their language. The noun *αιών* (*æon*), we are told, means *age*; and it is inferred that the adjective *αιώνιος* (*aionios*) means no more than *age-long*, and the theory of Origen propounded in the third century is revived, that there is an infinite succession of *æons*, or ages, and that sinful souls may at last in passing through these become purified. Origen held this view, however, as a matter of pure speculation; for he believed that the *Scripture taught the endless punishment of the wicked*, but in his *speculations* maintained that this was from prudential reasons on the part of the Creator, for fear that if the

whole truth were revealed, wicked men would wax too bold in their presumption.\*

Leaving speculation aside then, we will briefly review again the teachings of the Scripture which bear upon the question, whether the punishment of the incorrigibly wicked is strictly everlasting.

As we have already seen, the author of the Apocalypse three times describes the punishment of the wicked as continuing *for ever* and *ever*, making use of the same reduplication of the plural of αἰών (*æon*) which is so often employed to express the endlessness of the glory that should be ascribed to God. In Rev. xiv. 11, and xix. 3, the smoke of the torment of certain wicked persons is said to ascend up *for ever* and *ever* and in Rev. xx. 10, it is said that the devil and the false prophet shall be tormented *for ever* and *ever*.

The use of the adjective (αἰώνιος, *aionios*) derived from the foregoing noun is, however, more important. This adjective appears first in Plato, who in his *Timæus* (37, D) uses it interchangeably with αἰδῖος (*aidios*), a word which some would say was the more specific term for eternal. Neither of these adjectives is very frequent in classic Greek. But in the New Testament *aionios* occurs in nearly seventy undisputed passages, which is a fair number from which to determine its meaning. The definition of it to be found in Grimm's forthcoming

\* Hagenbach's *History of Doctrines*, vol. i., p. 227.

Lexicon of the New Testament \* is (1) without beginning or end, that which always was and always will be; (2) without beginning; (3) without end, never ceasing, everlasting. Now this adjective is used with relation to the future punishment of the wicked in the following passages:

Matt. xviii. 8: "It is good for thee to enter into life maimed or halt, rather than having two hands or two feet to be cast into the *eternal* fire;" xxv. 41: "Depart from me, ye cursed, into the *eternal* fire which is prepared for the devil and his angels;" xxv. 46: "And these shall go away into *eternal* punishment: but the righteous into *eternal* life;" Mark iii. 29: "Whosoever shall blaspheme against the Holy Spirit hath never forgiveness, but is guilty of an *eternal* sin;" 2 Thess. i. 9: "Who shall suffer punishment, even *eternal* destruction, from the face of the Lord;" Heb. vi. 2: "Not laying again a foundation of repentance from dead works . . . . and of *eternal* judgment;" Jude 7: "Suffering the punishment of *eternal* fire."

In forty-four cases it is joined with the word life, in such passages as John iii. 16: "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but have *eternal* life."

\* See the Hereafter of Sin, by Haley, p. 129. Prof. J. H. Thayer, the translator and editor of Grimm, furnishes the citation.



In explaining this phrase "eternal life," Maurice, Whiton, and others make a good deal out of John xvii. 3, "and this is life eternal, that they should know thee, the only true God, and him whom thou didst send, even Jesus Christ." From this it is inferred that *eternal* indicates a quality of life rather than its extent in duration, and from that conclusion the inference is drawn that *eternal* punishment means a *kind* of punishment rather than punishment which is *everlasting*.

Considering now simply this adjective αἰώνιος when used in the New Testament to qualify life, it is important to note that to determine what a word means in forty-three cases by its rhetorical use in one is not the proper way to do. If the word translated *eternal* had no meaning settled by general usage, there would perhaps be no objection to giving to it a qualitative rather than a temporal meaning in some of these forty-four cases. But the word *aionios* had a well-defined established temporal meaning, and this meaning fits well enough in all these forty-four passages, and in some of the places no other meaning can be made to fit, and with this meaning we can readily account for the two or three exceptions where another signification might seem to suit better. Such being the case, it is very unscientific and misleading to depart from the ordinary usage.

The phrase "eternal life" *implies*, however, far



more than it literally expresses. It is indeed, a time-word, but as such it carries with it by implication certain qualitative ideas, just as on the other hand, words expressive primarily of quality carry certain temporal implications. If we speak of an *everflowing* fountain we imply that it is *inexhaustible*, while if we call it *inexhaustible* we imply that it is also *everflowing*. When we speak of an *enduring* monument the *solidity* of the material is expressed by implication. When we say, the foundation "is as solid as a rock," we may have its endurance chiefly in mind. The phrases "everlasting hills" and "adamantine hills" convey substantially the same idea. What is more lasting to the imagination than adamant, and how better can the rhetorician express his conception of the solidity of the hills than to speak of the length of time through which they have endured, and seem likely to endure? It does not, therefore, weigh much with the experienced interpreter to find a word *occasionally* used to express its subsidiary or implied meaning, instead of its ordinary and established meaning, especially when the nature of the subject clearly indicates how one meaning in the case in hand can come from the other.

In reference to the phrase "eternal life," so often used by the sacred writers, the question is, Did they mean to express the conception of its

*perpetuity* from its *perennial nature*, or did they mean to emphasize its *perennial nature* by stating its *perpetuity*? Ordinary usage of the word certainly indicates the latter, and that must stand until some decisive reasons can be shown for the contrary supposition. And besides, if in the phrase "eternal life," eternal expresses a quality of the life, it is a quality which carries with it the idea of self-perpetuation. We do not see, therefore, that this would soften the meaning of the word at all when descriptive of punishment. Self-perpetuating punishment and self-propagating fire are still everlasting.

If for relief refuge be taken in the theory that the condition described by *aionios* is to last merely as long as the object endures of which the condition is predicated, it would remain to be proved that the disobedient soul is any less enduring than the obedient, and the surmise that sin tends to the extinction of the soul is far from being proof of the fact. We have no *vera causa*, as the scientific men would say, from which to set out in the direction of annihilationism. We do not know that the annihilation of a single soul is provided for in the scheme of the universe.

"Of the sixty-six undisputed passages in which *αιώνιος* (*aionios*) is employed in the Greek Testament, fifty-one are used in relation to the life and happiness of the righteous in such expressions as

eternal life (forty-four times), everlasting habitations, eternal salvation, eternal inheritance, the everlasting kingdom, his own (God's) eternal glory, etc. ; two have respect to God or his honor and glory ; three or four to the gospel, the covenant, the Spirit (of Christ or God), and the things which are not seen ; three to past ages long since, or eternal ; seven relate to future punishment, and in one the word is used to express the period . . . during which Philemon would have and enjoy Onesimus." This summary, which we have taken from Professor Tyler,\* we believe to be substantially correct. The only places in this summary where any doubt need exist as to the word having the significance of ever-enduring, excepting, for the present, those relating to punishment, are (*a*) that referring to Onesimus, Philem. 15, — and this may well refer to Philemon's Christian fellowship with his servant viewed as eternal (*b*) John vi. 47, xii. 50, xvii. 3, where eternal life is spoken of as a *present* possession, or is defined as being the *commandment* of God, or *faith* in Christ ; but men are very naturally said to have a thing when they have its beginning, and are secure of the remainder. In the other cases the essential quality is expressed by *life*, which here means not mere existence, but *blessed* existence. Jesus elsewhere says simply

\* New Englander, March, 1878, p. 226.

his words "*are life*," and speaks indifferently of entering into *life* and into *eternal life*. "Eternal" tells how long the life lasts.

Canon Farrar speaks of the incongruity of saying "endless God"; but it would be equally incongruous to speak of an "endless man." Yet we do speak of God's everlasting mercy; and the Psalmist, in addressing the Almighty, says, — "Thy years are throughout all generations: Thy years have no end" (Ps. cii., 24, 27). We can speak of the eternal God, but not of an eternal man, partly because the word "eternal" covers all the past as well as all the future, and partly for reasons that cannot be explained. We can not account for all the variety of usage exhibited in our present choice of words.

With such uniformity in the use of *aionios* (eternal), the presumption is overwhelming that when applied to punishment the word means everlasting, unless there is evidence to the contrary. The word gets its meaning largely from the connection in which it is used. If Dr. Whiston's favorite adjective, *æonian*, should be habitually used where in Scripture we now have everlasting, it would come to have just about the same meaning. "They who deny that any of the words used of future punishment in Holy Scripture express eternity, would do well to consider whether there is any way in which Almighty God

*could* have expressed it which they would have accepted as meaning it.” \*

The adjective *aionios*, which is seven times applied to the punishment of the wicked, is no more likely to be used in a restricted sense than our word endless. Indeed, in 1 Tim. i. 4, that very expression, both in Greek and in English, appears in a rhetorical sense. Paul speaks of *endless* genealogies (*aperantos*). We speak of *endless* trouble, of an *interminable* quarrel, of *everlasting* shame, and of conferring rights upon a man and his heirs *forever*; but the connection shows the rhetorical sense in which the expressions must be taken. Frequently also (as in Thucyd. iv. 20) the word *αἰδιος* (*aidios*) to which we have referred as what is supposed to be a more specific word for eternal, is used in a rhetorical manner. It devolves on those who would limit the temporal significance of the corresponding words in the Bible when applied to future punishment, to produce some positive indications from the nature of the subject, or from the context, that the word is used rhetorically in such connections.

Instead, however, of finding anything in the context to indicate that the punishment of those who die impenitent is limited in duration, the general tenor in Scripture as well as many separate and diverse phrases confirm the impression of its

\* What is of Faith as to Everlasting Punishment? p. 44.

unending nature. The discourse of the Saviour leading up to the solemn climax at the close of the twenty-fifth chapter of Matthew, is most impressive and startling. To the virgins who neglected to buy oil for their lamps, the *door was shut*; so they could not enter in (vs. 10, 11). The unprofitable servant was to be cast into outer darkness (vs. 30). All nations are to come before the Son of man for judgment, and he is to separate the righteous from the wicked as the shepherd divideth the sheep from the goats; the wicked "shall go away into eternal punishment, and the righteous into eternal life." The force of the parallelism in which the same adjective (*aionios*), is used to describe the punishment of the wicked as is applied to the reward of life for the righteous cannot easily be broken. The word here which indicates the final condition of the wicked is not, it should be observed, death, but punishment (*kolasin*), occurring elsewhere in the New Testament only in 1 John iv. 18, "Perfect love casteth out fear, because fear hath *punishment*." The parallelism of the last verse of Matt. xxv., is however scarcely more solemn and impressive than the intimation of finality running through the whole discourse. "And the door was shut. Afterward come also the other virgins, saying, Lord, Lord, open unto us. But he answered and said, verily, I say unto you, I know you not" (vs. 11, 12).



Earlier in his discourse our Lord had described this punishment to which the wicked were to be consigned as *unquenchable* (*asbeston*) fire, and fire that *is not* quenched, and the place of punishment as a place where their worm *does not* die (Mark ix. 43, 48). Whenever we think of making the word *aionios* mean less than everlasting in duration when applied to the punishment of the wicked, there comes to our mind again the great gulf fixed in the other world between the rich man and Lazarus, that they who "would pass from hence to you may not be able, and that *none may cross over from thence to us*" (Luke xvi. 26); and the blasphemy against the Holy Spirit, which hath *never* forgiveness (Mark iii. 29), and "it *shall not* be forgiven him neither in this world nor in that which is to come" (Matt. xii. 31, 32); nor can we wholly explain away as rhetoric the solemn words towards the close of Revelation: "Behold I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to render to each man according as his work is . . . Blessed are they that wash their robes, that they may have the right to come to the tree of life, and may enter in by the gates into the city. Without are the dogs, and the sorcerers, and the fornicators, and the murderers, and the idolaters, and every one that loveth and maketh a lie" (xxii. 12-15).

When, again, we are inclined to take refuge in the doctrine of the final annihilation of the wicked,



we are brought to a stand by the many passages which show that death as a penalty of sin means far more than the cessation of physical life, or than the extinction of our being. In John v. 24, we read that the believer "has passed out of death into life;" and 1 John iii. 14, that "we know that we have passed out of death into life, because we love the brethren;" and again, in 1 Tim. v. 6, she that giveth herself to pleasure is declared to be *dead* while *she liveth*. Nor is it easy to keep out of our minds the fact that when eternal punishment is contrasted with eternal life (Matt. xxv. 46), the word for punishment is expressive of conscious suffering, and not of extinction; nor yet again, that the punishment of the wicked is so often said to be torment, and that the wrath of God is said to *abide* on him that obeyeth not the Son (John iii. 36). Nor can we help being startled at the warning of our Saviour in Luke xii. 4, 5, "Be not afraid of them which kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do. But I will warn you whom ye shall fear: Fear him, which after he hath killed hath power to cast into hell [*Gehenna*]; yea, I say unto you, Fear him." The statement in Jude 7, that Sodom and Gomorrah are suffering the punishment of *eternal* fire, is sometimes referred to as showing that that fire is eternal whose effects remain; but the Saviour has hinted to us that at the judgment these cities will

receive sentence continuative of that begun in the time of Lot (Matt. x. 15).

The belief that the punishment of the wicked in the world to come is endless, does not arise from a forced interpretation of Scripture; nor does it rest upon recondite arguments accessible mainly to scholars; nor are the arguments such as are greatly affected one way or another by niceties of translation. The Bible was addressed to the common people, and its more important doctrines are so woven into the texture of sacred discourse as to appear in bold outline upon the surface, like the figures inwrought in tapestry. It comes to be, therefore, a consideration of great weight, that the mass of Christians of all ages of the world have understood the language of their master to teach the doctrine in question. "It was the faith of the martyrs, it was recognized as the faith of Christians by the heathen. . . . No one doubts that millions upon millions of Christians, century after century, have believed it. . . . From whose words did all before the Origenists learn their belief in hell? Upon whose words do all who now believe it rest their belief? Whose words have all who disbelieved it had to explain away?" \*

\* See Pusey's *What is of Faith as to Everlasting Punishment*; where also the testimony of the early church writers and martyrs is collected.

The reader who may be disconcerted by Canon Farrar's over-confident assertions, will find a full collection of the opinions of all the early Christian writers upon this subject in the volume of Dr. Pusey referred to in the preceding note. The facts are that, with the exception of Origen in the third century, there was, for more than three hundred years after the death of Christ, practical unanimity in accepting the doctrine of eternal punishment. Even Clement of Alexandria (A. D. 165, 220), whose writings, it has been claimed, favor both annihilationism and restorationism (which are contradictory notions), warns his readers against lust, because the affection which arises from the fire which we call love leads to the *fire which will never cease* in consequence of sin,\* and speaks of securing exemption from *everlasting death* by a little pain.† He also expressly speaks of punishment as inflicted in some cases for other objects than discipline. "But when it [the law] sees any one in such a condition as to appear incurable, posting to the last stage of wickedness, then in its solicitude for the rest, that they be not destroyed by it (just as if amputating a foot from the whole body), it condemns such an one to death, as the course most conducive to health." ‡

\* Pedagogics, Book iii. chap. 11.

† Ibid., Book i. chap. 8.

‡ Miscellanies, Book i. chap. 27.

Upon Origen's speculative views we have already remarked.\*

We should also reflect seriously on the fact that the doctrine of endless punishment rests mainly upon Christ's own words, which were for the most part addressed to the common people. We cannot doubt that he foresaw the effect of his words. We have, therefore, little need to enter into the historical question concerning the views held by the Jews with reference to the phrase "Gehenna" or "Gehenna of fire," so often used by the Saviour as descriptive of the place of future punishment (Matt. v. 22, 29, 30; x. 28; xviii. 9; xxiii. 15, 33; Mark ix. 43, 45, 47; Luke xii. 5); though we think it clear from the literature of the period, that the Jews of Christ's time understood Gehenna as the common people do the English word hell, referring to a condition which is endless in duration.† That the Jews of Christ's time believed in everlasting punishment for the wicked, is clear from the testimony of Josephus, who tells us‡ that the Pharisees taught that the souls of the wicked after death were consigned to an everlasting imprisonment (*εἰς γαμὸν αἰδίου*), and were to be punished with eternal vengeance (*αἰδίῳ τιμωρίᾳ κολάζεσθαι*).

\* See above, p. 83.

† See Pusey's *What is of Faith as to Everlasting Punishment*, pp. 48 *et seq.* 98, *et seq.*

‡ *Antiq.* xviii. chap. 2; *Bel. Jud.* ii. chap. 7.

But whatever view one entertains upon this historical question, there is no doubt that the masses of the early Christians learned the doctrine of everlasting punishment from the language of Jesus and his apostles. If Gehenna did not refer to everlasting punishment before Christ, it certainly did after, for he described it as *quenchless* fire, where their worm *dieth not*, and the fire is *not* quenched. In the abundant references to their belief by the early martyrs they contrast the temporary fire in which they are to be burned with the *inextinguishable* and *eternal* fire to which they would be consigned should they deny the faith.

These are, in brief, the exegetical considerations which compel us to retain the doctrine of everlasting punishment as a part of our Christian faith. To explain this teaching away after the manner of the authors quoted in the beginning of this chapter, seems to us like abandoning the guidance of Scripture altogether.

If we turn away from the word of the inspired writers, to whom shall we go? Let us not deceive ourselves upon this subject. No new light of great importance has dawned upon this generation respecting the subject of future rewards and punishments. The church in the early ages had the words of Christ and his apostles. We have no more. The discoveries of modern science do not lead in the direction of sounding the deeper depths

of the Creator's moral government. In the realm of religious truth one is our master, even Christ, and we are children at his feet. So far the facts accumulated by the abundant scholarship of this century do not materially change the lines of controversy concerning what is to be believed with reference to future retribution.

## CHAPTER V.

### CONCLUSION.

THE main object of our Lord's coming to the earth was not to proclaim everlasting punishment, but rather to provide a way of escape from it. Man's sense of ill-desert was already so keen, and his knowledge of the unequal distribution of rewards and punishment in this world was so full that the doctrine of future retribution did not need great reinforcement from revelation. The moral law was written in the hearts of men long before it was graven on the two tables of stone. Our first parents, as soon as they had sinned, shrank from meeting God, and endeavored to hide themselves from his sight. The Creator has not left himself anywhere without witness. The prevalence of idolatry is itself a testimony that man, even in his most degraded condition, is not without some knowledge of God. The preacher of righteousness finds everywhere in the wide world a conscience responding to and confirming the message which he brings.

We are in danger of underestimating the relative rank of the human soul amid the hierarchies



of God's creation. Even to reason's eye the distance separating a responsible being from one who has no sense of responsibility is immeasurable. We need not feel humbled at the definition which some naturalists give of the human species. Man's distinguishing characteristic, they say, is his capacity for religion. He is a religious animal. So be it; for the great philosopher of Germany truly said, there were two things in the universe peculiarly calculated to fill us with perpetual astonishment. These two things are the starry heavens above us and the moral law within us. Of these the latter is doubtless far the most wonderful.

The grandeur of the soul in its native proportions is too often overlooked amid the materialism of prosperous times. There is a constant tendency to exaggerate the significance and the value of the externalities of human life. The political economist looks upon his fellow-men as so many machines for the production of wealth. The philanthropist too often regards man as passive material whose chief attractive quality is, that upon its surface certain signs of culture can be impressed. Education is the watchword of such. But the freedom of man's will loses its significance in that view of human nature which makes sin the offspring of ignorance rather than the father of guilt.

The scriptural view of the scale upon which man has been created contains every conceivable element of sublimity. This view appears not less in its doctrines of sin and punishment than in the scheme it portrays as having been laid in heaven for man's redemption. The teachings of Scripture concerning sin, punishment and redemption, stand or fall together. Like the stones in an arch, if one is loosened the permanence of the whole structure is endangered; and these doctrines rest upon the views cherished concerning the relative dignity of the human soul. The solicitude felt by theologians for the maintenance in the faith of the Church of the full scriptural representations of future retribution, arises from the logical relation of that doctrine to the whole biblical scheme of salvation.

We should remember that the scheme of salvation is accepted upon faith; that is, belief in the facts of the gospel is the product of inductive reasoning. Christian faith is more than a blind impulse of the religious feelings; it is a well-grounded conviction of the reality of the incarnation, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. In all arguments for the truth of Christianity the congruity of its scheme of salvation plays no small part in the evidence.\* There must be visible some appropriate relation between the

\* See Logic of Christian Evidences, p. 123 *et seq.*

means and the end. If the alleged object of the plan do not correspond to the greatness of the purported means used, the assertion that the means have been employed, will be discredited.

The doctrines of the incarnation of Christ and of the continued presence of the Holy Spirit with the Church, are correlated to a very exalted conception of God's holiness and of man's worth, and to a very dark view of man's guilt. No doubt, the chief motive power of the gospel is its manifestation of the love of God in Christ. Christ is the object upon which the weary eyes of the nations are to be turned. But the light shines out of great darkness; and this background of human guilt, from which the cross appears on Calvary, can never cease to be an essential element in giving effect to the picture. If we heedlessly ignore the greatness of the hazard sinners were in before Christ came, we shall, also, by thus diminishing our conception of the urgency of his mission, diminish the credibility of the mission itself.

There is something wonderfully impressive in the respect shown by the Creator to the freedom of choice, which has been bestowed upon the human race. In the Christian scheme of salvation God becomes the suitor, striving by extraordinary means to win the affections of men. Christ stands

at the door and knocks, and pleads for the privilege of being a guest in man's humble dwelling. It is no wonder the Psalmist exclaimed, — "What is man, that thou art mindful of him? and the son of man, that thou visitest him?" nor that he concluded that the human race is but little lower than the angels, or, as the Hebrew has it, little less than divine. In the gospel, God condescends to treat with men as the representatives of one nation treat with those of another whose independence has been recognized. But all this is an act of mercy and forbearance on the part of the Creator. Yet He respects the moral freedom of man, and does not put forth his hand to destroy that high prerogative.

The greatest of all mysteries is that God has thus endowed man with free-will, and has allowed him to sin; yet the facts cannot be disputed. God has created man in his own image, and suffered him to deface it. God has made for himself a temple in the human heart, and suffered it to be defiled. The reason cannot solve the paradox of an Almighty and Benevolent Being hating sin, and yet not preventing it. The essential mystery shrouding this question does not pertain to the endless continuance of punishment or sin, but to the permission of sin at all, and of the evils we know to follow in its train. The monotonous list of crimes that is served up to us at each breakfast

by the daily papers, should restrain us from speculating too freely upon the Creator's power to eliminate sin from the system he has established. Perhaps the *elimination of sin* would involve the *elimination of the system*.

Now that the creation exists, it is our province to study the conditions of its existence, and to adjust ourselves to them. In speculating with reference to what the Creator will do, we are not at liberty to close our eyes to what he has done. What we know is the only proper basis from which to reason with reference to what we do not know. From the existence of sin we know that there is some inherent difficulty in the way of securing the universal reign of righteousness among beings possessed of such powers as the Creator has bestowed upon the human race. The wisdom of God appears in the creation as well as in the government of his creatures. The wisdom displayed in the Creator's plan of government cannot run counter to that displayed in the creation. God has seen fit to make us so that we can defy his authority. God has seen fit to create the world so that as a result of sin there is an untold amount of misery in it. When any one can reconcile the present state of things in the world with his ideas of divine goodness and wisdom and power, we will listen to his speculative arguments against endless punishment. Until then, we prefer not to tamper

with the words of Scripture, but to receive them in their obvious meaning.

Nor is the salvation of men a mere matter of persuading sinners to turn away from their sins. In the very act of bestowing upon men such exalted powers, the Creator assumed the responsibilities of a moral governor. God has more than a personal relation to the individual sinner. When a *race* of sinners is suffered to come into existence, God has no longer left himself free to treat the individual sinner as though he were alone in the universe. Henceforth there is a law to be maintained, and a well-ordered system of influences to be kept in operation. When God has chosen his system, the wisdom leading to that choice determines what he may do under the conditions created.

The forgiveness of sin is not represented in the Scripture as an event which can be easily secured. Mercy must not dethrone justice. Offers of pardon to men have not been made unconditionally. The Divine lawgiver guards himself against being misinterpreted by his creatures. If he forgives sin, he provides also for maintaining the dignity of the law. He takes pains to show himself to be just while justifying him that hath faith in Jesus (Rom. iii. 26). The sacrifices of the Jewish dispensation prefigured a greater sacrifice which was made in the incarnation and sufferings and death of our



Lord Jesus Christ. There reason reposes upon an ultimate mystery. The truth symbolized by the cross of Christ possesses, indeed, supernatural power over the affections and life of the believer. But the peace which follows faith in Christ arises in part from the fact that the atoning sacrifice is seen to be commensurate with the sin forgiven; and the sinner's consciousness of guilt is so great that he cannot be satisfied till this Divine sacrifice is in some way revealed to him. The sacrifice implies the guilt, and the guilt demands the redemptive sacrifice to save the soul from the eternal condemnation of the law. Man is not threatened with eternal punishment because he sins a great while, but because he despises the birthright from his Creator, and exchanges "the truth of God for a lie," and worships the creature rather than the Creator.

As we have read the Scriptures we have understood their teachings to be such as to compel us, if we credit them, to say: We believe that God made man but little lower than the angels, and bestowed upon him his own image. "In the image of God created he him."

We believe that God has so written his law in the hearts of all men, and so manifested himself to them through his works and through the general illumination of his Spirit, that they are without excuse for their sin.



We believe that in addition to what He has done for men in the course of nature, God has made atonement for sin through the humiliation and sufferings of His incarnate Son; that by virtue of this atonement pardon is offered to all who in this life truly repent, and that God has provided in the gospel a supplementary system of supernatural agencies for man's recovery. But we do not find evidence that the light of the gospel is to shine upon men with the same universality as the light of nature does.

We believe that in bringing the persuasive influences of the gospel to bear upon men, God takes the church into real partnership with himself, and makes its members co-workers with him, and that if those who have the gospel are remiss in their duty to proclaim it, the blood of souls will be required at their hands.

We believe that at the end of the world Christ is to judge all mankind according to the deeds done in the body; when the wicked will enter a condition of everlasting punishment, and the righteous will enter into the full enjoyment of a life which is everlasting.

We believe that there is no radical change of character between death and the judgment, but that those who are righteous at death continue to be righteous, and those who are impenitent at death remain under condemnation.

We believe that God is able so to apportion the penalties of the future world that even though they be everlasting no injustice shall be done to those who have sinned under the lesser degrees of light.

So much we are compelled to believe upon this subject, in order to comprehend in our faith all that is clearly taught or implied in the Scriptures. Against these points of Christian faith no objections can be urged which do not lie with equal force against the system of nature, which we all admit to be from God. Christianity is no more responsible for the evils of the universe, which it partially alleviates, than is the physician for the diseases which he strives to heal. It is for us to accept with thankfulness the life and immortality which Christ brings to light, and more than all, to accept the measure of responsibility for the conversion of the world which God in the plans of his providence lays upon us.

Some of the practical results likely to follow the dissemination of the belief that those who have not had Christ presented in this world will have the offers of salvation extended to them in the other world, demand still further consideration before we drop this discussion. One is, that if the doctrine of future probation is adhered to in the face of all the intimations and clear teachings of Scripture against it, we are likely to lose confidence in the

Bible as an inspired guide. There is a limit beyond which it will not do to go in explaining away the unpalatable teachings of God's Word. We must take care lest in our attempts to remove the ugly-looking crystals from our foundation-stone, we do not disintegrate the foundation itself. If such teaching as we have in the Bible upon the subject of everlasting punishment is obscure, what have we left that is clear?

Again, if the presentation of Christ to sinners here is to close their probation and prevent their having offers of mercy in the world to come, it will be difficult for us to persuade ourselves that it is best to assume that responsibility; for we instinctively say, if God has mercy still in store for men after death, dependent on their not having had the offers here, it may be a very ungracious thing for us to intervene with our imperfect presentation of the truth, and thus forestall the offers of the world to come. In the words of another,\* "Would it not seem to many minds to be a work of dubious benevolence to impose on heathen tribes the intense tests of character which Christianity creates, if without them the heathen soul might find its probation in another world? When Alexander Duff fired the heart of Scotland on the subject of missions to India, the new departure was opposed by the 'Moderator' in the General

\* Professor Phelps.

Assembly, as 'tending to disturb the moral chances of happy and contented pagans.' One part of the argument was that as they had little chance here, they might, if they were let alone, have another elsewhere. The sequence is inevitable from even the conjecture of probation in another world. 'If another, surely a better world than this: let us wait for it!' So the mind instinctively reasons."

The church needs to consider anew her relation to the whole doctrine of future punishment. It is not the part of God's people to suffer what is called the "spirit of the age," or the "tendency of the times" to form for them their religious beliefs. The word of God is committed to the church that believers may control the spirit of the age, and direct the tendencies of the times. The church does not conquer the world by agreeing with it, but by boldly adhering to the truth. The true church is the light of the world — a city set on a hill that cannot be hid. The measure of responsibility for the salvation of men, which the doctrines upheld by evangelical Christians throw upon those who have the gospel, is not altogether pleasant to bear. But when we reflect upon the price at which our own freedom has been purchased, it will seem a slight return for us to lay all we have upon the altar of sacrifice. The blood of martyrs has all along been the seed of the church. It is not

becoming for us, who have so freely received, to shut our eyes to this heaven-ordained law of Divine procedure. Not only have we been purchased by the blood of Christ, but we have been brought to a knowledge of the truth by the self-sacrifice of a long line of heroic ancestors, and have been set as stewards in an order of things in which a condition of the further spread of the gospel is the faithfulness of those already possessing it.

Since these things are so, what manner of men ought we to be? There is much just complaint that the profession of Christianity does not mean as much as it has done at some former times in the history of the church. To some extent this complaint is doubtless true; for it seems evident that the increase of the moral power of the church does not keep pace with its numerical increase. This is coming about, we fear, through a relaxation of our hold upon the great truths of Christianity. We are not sufficiently sensible of the horribleness of the pit out of which our feet have been drawn. Our hearts are not duly inflamed to gratitude in view of the atoning work of Christ in our behalf, and of the sacrifices endured by the faithful in former times in order to hand down to us the treasures of the gospel. We do not reflect sufficiently upon the fact that the keys of the kingdom of heaven are now given to us of this generation, and that through our unfaithfulness generations of the

heathen may be forever deprived of those special advantages of grace which we enjoy.

We cannot successfully resist the tide of worldliness by declaiming against it, nor uproot the increasing tendencies to frivolity by denunciation. Self-sacrifice and moral heroism do not spring up at the bare command of the church. These qualities are the fruit of beliefs which are nourished, and of the views of life which are propagated by Christian teachers. We shall reap according to the truths we sow. We need more than anything else to be made sensible of eternal realities, and to come under the influence of the powers of an endless life. There is no occasion to attempt by metaphysical subtleties to rob eternity of its meaning. There is little need of attempting to justify the ways of God by trying to show that this state of probation is so poorly planned that there must be another probation in order to make God's wisdom and goodness manifest. We shall not establish ourselves in the truth by hovering continually about the obscure places in the Divine revelation, nor by magnifying the doubtful questions suggested by every practical system of faith when applied to extreme cases.

It is for us to obey the Saviour's command, and preach the gospel to every creature according to our ability and opportunity. The exhortations of the prophet were not alone for the men of his



generation. They are also for us of the present time. "Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in mine house, and prove me now herewith, saith the Lord of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing that there shall not be room enough to receive it." Mal. iii. 10.









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